

Miss Newton

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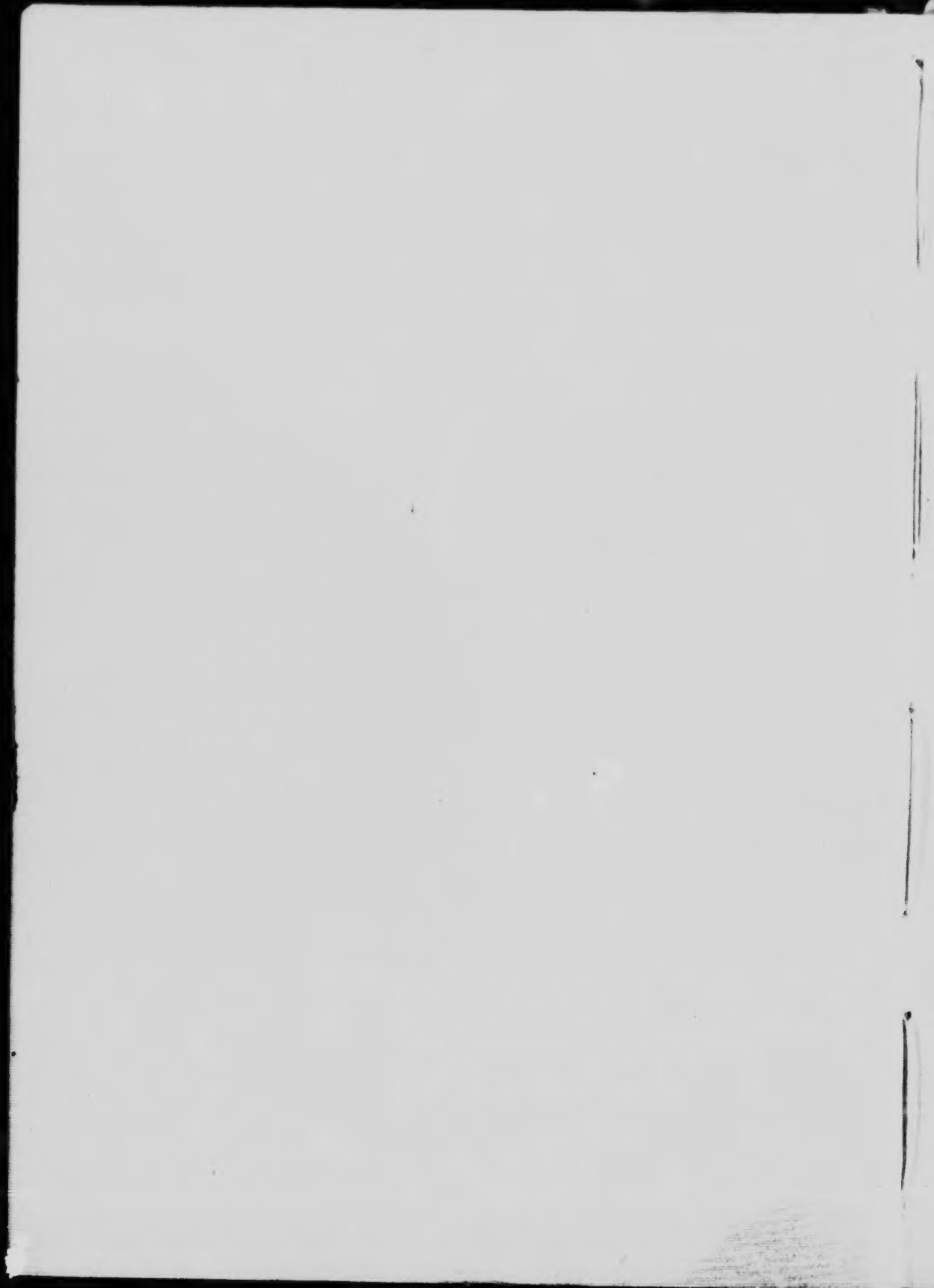
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SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

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SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born at Ottery St. Mary, Devonshire, on October 21st, 1772. His father dying in 1774, the boy was sent to Christ's Hospital, the famous London charity school. Coleridge, at the age of fifteen, sought to relieve the monotony of school life by becoming apprenticed to a cobbler, but luckily an irate schoolmaster stood between him and the realization of this freak. After ten years of somewhat dreary school life, he was, in January, 1791, appointed an exhibitioner at Jesus College, Cambridge. His "discharge" from the school bears the date of September 7th, 1791, and in the following month he went into residence at Cambridge. His life at the University was uneventful, save for one peculiar incident — his erratic enlistment as a private in the King's Regiment of Light Dragoons. His friends eventually bought him out, and he received his discharge in April, 1794. He returned a penitent to Cambridge, where he was publicly admonished by the Master of his College in the presence of the Fellows. In December of the same year he left the University without taking a degree.

Coleridge had never been a systematic student, but had been since his childhood a wide and omnivorous reader, and had evinced a growing enthusiasm for poetry. While at Cambridge he published a drama in

verse—*The Fall of Robespierre*—the result of the joint labors of himself and his Oxford friend, Robert Southey. After leaving Cambridge he settled in lodgings at Bristol, where he gained a scanty livelihood by writing verses for a printer of that place named Cottle. On the strength of his meagre earnings he ventured to marry Miss Sarah Fricker on October 4th, 1795, a few days before Southey led her sister to the altar.

The young couple settled at Clevedon, in Somersetshire. Here Coleridge wrote some of his well-known poems, and established a weekly journal called *The Watchman*, which did not survive its early numbers. The laudanum habit, which proved so fatal to his happiness and so injurious to his intellectual powers, was apparently contracted about this time.

On the last day of 1796 the Coleridge family moved to Nether Stowey, in Somersetshire. Here, in close neighborhood to the poet Wordsworth, they lived for nearly two years, and here the two poets formulated those poetic theories which were destined to exert so fruitful an influence on English Literature. Coleridge wrote his drama *Osorio* (later called *Remorse*) in 1797, and by March 1798, his *Ancient Mariner* was completed. To this creative period we likewise owe the commencement of a remarkable poem, *Christabel*, which was added to at a later date, but was never completed. Coleridge also contributed a number of political articles to the *Morning Post*, and frequently preached in neighboring Unitarian pulpits. His material hardships were lessened by the receipt of an annuity of £150 (subsequently reduced) from Thomas and Josiah Wedgewood.

From September, 1798, to June, 1799, Coleridge resided in Germany, familiarizing himself with German metaphysical thought. Late in 1799 he returned to England, and at first devoted himself to journalism in London. In July of 1800 he settled down at Greta Hall, Keswick, in the Lake Country, where Wordsworth was then residing. In 1804 he sailed to Malta in search of health, and passing through Italy returned to England in August, 1806. The remaining incidents in his life may be briefly summarized. A second journalistic venture, *The Friend*, lived from June, 1809, to March, 1810. In October of the latter year he left the Lake Country, and lived with a Mr. and Mrs. Morgan in London and the neighborhood for a space of six years, namely to 1816. In 1815 a critical volume, *Biographia Literaria*, was published. From 1816 to his death in 1834, he lived principally at Highgate with a surgeon named Gillman. His interests were now chiefly theological and metaphysical, and through his prose work, but chiefly by his remarkable powers of conversation, he exerted a deep influence upon all who came in contact with him. He died on July 25th, 1834.

Miss Wordsworth's contemporary description is of interest: "He is a wonderful man. His conversation teems with soul, mind, and spirit. Then he is so benevolent, so good tempered and cheerful, and, like William, interests himself so much about every trifle. At first I thought him very plain—that is for about three minutes. He is pale, thin, has a wide mouth, thick lips, and not very good teeth, longish, loose-growing, half-curling, rough black hair. But if you hear him speak for five minutes, you think no more of them. His eye is large and full, and not very dark, but gray,

such an eye as would receive from a heavy soul the dullest expression ; but it speaks every emotion of his animated mind ; it has more of ' the poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling ' than I have ever witnessed. He has fine, dark eyebrows and an overhanging forehead. "

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

Born, October 21, 1772.

Enters at Christ's Hospital, July 18, 1782.

Residence at Jesus College, Cambridge, October, 1791.

Enlists in the King's Regiment of Light Dragoons, December 2, 1793.

Discharged from the army, April 10, 1794.

Visits Oxford and meets Southey, June, 1794.

Pantisocracy scheme, autumn, 1794.

Leaves Cambridge without a degree, December, 1794.

Settles at Bristol. Public lectures, January, 1795.

Marries Sarah Fricker, October 4, 1795.

Publishes first edition of poems, April, 1796.

Issues *The Watchman*, March 1 to May 13, 1796.

Hartley Coleridge born, September 19, 1796.

Settles at Nether Stowey, December 31, 1796.

Second edition of poems, June, 1797.

The *Ancient Mariner* begun, November 13, 1797 ; finished, March 23, 1798.

First part of *Christabel* begun, 1797.

Receives £150 annuity from the Wedgewoods, January, 1798.

Goes to Germany, September 16, 1798.

Returns from Germany, July, 1799.

Journalism with the *Morning Post*, December, 1799.

- Translates Schiller's *Wallenstein*, spring, 1800.
Settles at Greta Hall, Keswick, July 24, 1800.
Second part of *Christabel*, autumn, 1800.
Studies German metaphysics, 1801.
Third edition of *Poems*, 1803.
Sails for Malta, April 9, 1804.
Travels in Sicily, August to November, 1804.
Resides in Rome, January to May, 1806.
Returns to England, August, 1806.
Begins to appear again as lecturer, 1808 and following years.
Settles at Allan Bank, Grasmere (with Wordsworth), September, 1808.
Issues *The Friend*, June 1, 1809, to March 15, 1810.
Settles at Hammersmith with the Morgans, November 3, 1810.
His tragedy *Remorse* at Drury Lane, January 23, 1813.
Settles with Mr. Gillman at Highgate, April 16, 1816.
Publication of *Christabel*, June, 1816.
Publication of *Biographia Literaria* and *Sibylline Leaves*, 1817.
The Friend revised and published, 1818.
Becomes "Royal Associate" of the Royal Society of Literature, May, 1824.
Publication of *Aids to Reflection*, May to June, 1825.
Tour on the Rhine with Wordsworth, June to July, 1828.
Revised edition of poetical works, 1829.
Publication of *Church and State*, 1830.
Death, July 25, 1834.

APPRECIATIONS

"No man has all the resources of poetry in such profusion. His fancy and diction would long ago have placed him above all his contemporaries had they been under the direction of a sound judgment and a steady will."—*Sir Walter Scott*.

"Of Coleridge's best verses I venture to affirm that the world has nothing like them, and can never have; that they are of the highest kind and their own. An age that should neglect or forget Coleridge might neglect or forget any poet that ever lived. That may be said of him which can hardly be said of any but the greatest among men, that come what may to the world in course of time, it will never see his place filled."—*Algernon Charles Swinburne*.

"Yet Coleridge is, or may be reckoned a great poet, because ever now and then he captures in verse that indefinable emotion which is less articulately expressed in music, and in some unutterable way he transports us into the world of dream and desire. This is a very vague fashion of saying what hardly permits itself to be said. We might put it that Coleridge has, on occasion, the power to move us, as we are moved by the most rarely beautiful cosmic effects of magic lights and shadows; by the silver on lakes for a chosen moment in the dawn of twilight; by the fragrant deeps of dewy forests; by sudden, infrequent passions of heart and memory; and by unexpected potencies of imagination. What those things, and such things as these, can do in life, Coleridge can do in verse. His world becomes 'an unsubstantial fairy place,' and yet more real than the world of experience; it is a place which we may have

remembered out of a previous life, or may have foreseen, in a glance of the not-ourselves in which we mysteriously move and have our being. Coleridge has, in brief, 'the key of the happy golden land,' but he seldom opens the portals that unfold themselves to the sound of his music.

'He on honey dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise,'

and therefore with music 'he builds that dome in air' of his pleasure-house. It is his possession of this gift, the rarest gift, that makes Coleridge great; his own consciousness could not tell whence the gift came, nor why it came so seldom."—*Andrew Lang*.

"*Kubla Khan* does not belong to human life, and it stands alone for melody in English poetry. Whenever Coleridge rises into this exquisite melody in its perfection, he also rises into that subtilized imaginative world of thought, half supernatural, half natural, which was special to him, and which pervades *The Ancient Mariner* and *Christabel* and a few other poems. The music and the sphere of the poem are partly beyond this world of ours. Yet in part they touch it."—*Rev. Stopford Brooke*.

"In precisely the same way, I suppose, as the best journalists—i. e., those that give the most vivid impressions of what they have seen to their readers—are men who have apparently devoted a wonderfully short space of time to their observation, so it would seem that for the writing of real sea poetry an extended acquaintance with maritime conditions is not merely unnecessary but hampering. I have come to this conclusion reluctantly but inevitably, for in common with all reading seafarers I have noticed that we may look in vain for sea poetry from sailors. Sailors have written verse, Falconer's

Shipwreck to wit, but between that peculiar poem and the marvellous majesty, profound insight, and truly amazing knowledge of deep sea secrets exhibited in *The Ancient Mariner* how great a gulf is fixed. 'Only those who brave its dangers comprehend its mystery,' rings true, and yet it is no less true that Longfellow, very little more of a sailor than Coleridge, has also interpreted the mystery of the mighty ocean in a manner (most sailors think) only second in true poetic power to that of Coleridge. To the well-read sailor—and there are far more of them than one would imagine—remembering the poverty of his literary output, Coleridge always stands easily highest, Longfellow next, and Byron next as the interpreters of the voices of the sea."—*F. T. Bullen*.

"It may be confidently said that Coleridge fills an unique position among English poets. The verbal felicities of his diction, and the strangeness and beauty of his imagination, are his most distinctive claims to greatness. Yet his verse rarely rises from mere melody to the higher regions of poetic harmony. His instrument is a flute of incredible sweetness, but the organ roll of Milton gives forth a deeper and a richer sound. Again, his imaginative vision is unique, but it is at the same time abnormal and limited in range. He has not the emotional fervor which lyrical poetry demands, and his odes are the outcome rather of intellectual conviction than of passion. *The Ode to Dejection*, which draws its inspiration from the intensity of his despair, is the only poem in which we hear the genuine lyrical cry. His dramas are not successful, for he lacked constructive ability, and his metaphysical views of life disturbed his vision."—*Pelham Edgar*.

THE RIME OF
THE ANCIENT MARINER
IN SEVEN PARTS

PART I

It is an ancient Mariner,
And he stoppeth one of three.
"By thy long gray beard and glittering eye,
Now wherefore stopp'st thou me?

An ancient
Mariner
meeteth
three Gal-
lants bidden
to a wed-
ding feast,
and detain-
eth one.

The Bridegroom's doors are open wide,
And I am next of kin;
The guests are met, the feast is set:
May'st hear the merry din."

He holds him with his skinny hand,
"There was a ship," quoth he.
"Hold off! unhand me, graybeard loon!"
Eftsoons his hand dropt he.

1. The abrupt opening is characteristic of ballad poetry.
3. **glittering**. Show the appropriateness of the word.
Note the method of indirect description.

7. Note the internal rime. Point out other examples. Observe the effectiveness of the contrast expressed in the opening stanzas—worldly joy on the one hand, spiritual mystery on the other.

10-12. Note the rich rime, *he : he*.

12. **Eftsoons** = *soon after, forthwith*.

The Wed-
ding-Guest
is spellbound
by the eye of
the old sea-
faring man,
and con-
strained to
hear his tale.

He holds him with his glittering eye—
The Wedding-Guest stood still,
15 And listens like a three years' child:
The Mariner hath his will

The Wedding-Guest sat on a stone:
He cannot choose but hear;
And thus spake on that ancient man,
20 The bright-eyed Mariner.

"The ship was cheered, the harbor cleared,
Merrily did we drop
Below the kirk, below the hill,
Below the light-house top.

The Mariner 25
tells how
the ship
sailed south-
ward with
good wind
and fair
weather, till
it reached
the Line.

The sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came he!
And he shone bright, and on the right
Went down into the sea.

Higher and higher every day,
30 Till over the mast at noon—" "
The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,
For he heard the loud bassoon.

13. **He holds**, etc. The mesmeric spell is complete, and there is no longer need to hold him with his hand, as in line 9.

15, 16. Contributed by Wordsworth.

18. **hear**. Loose rimes as *hear: mariner* are a common license in popular ballads. Point out other examples. Compare lines 38-40 for a repetition of lines 18-20 (another ballad characteristic). See also lines 588-590 for a recurrence to the same idea.

20. **The bright-eyed Mariner**. Epithets and figures are of the simplest and most conventional character in the old ballads. Is *bright-eyed* merely conventional here?

22. **drop**. Here used in the nautical sense—to put out to sea with the ebbing tide.

25 f. Simplicity is the prevailing quality in Coleridge's descriptions.

The bride hath paced into the hall,
 Red as a rose is she;
 Nodding their heads before her goes
 • The merry minstrel.

The Wedding-Guest
 heareth the
 bridal mu-
 sic; but the
 35 Mariner
 continueth
 his tale.

The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,
 Yet he cannot choose but hear;
 And thus spake on that ancient man,
 The bright-eyed Mariner.

“And now the Storm-blast came, and he
 Was tyrannous and strong:
 He struck with his o’ertaking wings,
 And chased us south along.”

The ship
 driven by a
 storm to-
 wards the
 south pole.

With sloping masts and dipping prow,
 As who pursued with yell and blow
 Still treads the shadow of his foe,
 And forward bends his head,
 The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,
 And southward ay we fled.

And now there came both mist and snow,
 And it grew wondrous cold:
 And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
 As green as emerald.

37. **The Wedding-Guest he beat.** In the ballads, the repetition of the subject was not uncommon; e. g.,

“Our king he kept a false steward.”

Sir Aldingar, line 1 (*Percy's Reliques*).

45. **With sloping masts.** Analyze the figure in this stanza, and develop its full force.

46. **As who pursued.** Supply the antecedent. Its omission is archaic. Cf.:

“As who should say, ‘I am Sir Oracle.’”

Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*, I, i.

52-54. cold: emerald. 1798 edition, *cauld: emerauld.*

The land of
ice, and of
fearful
sounds,
where no
living thing
was to be
seen.

55 And through the drifts the snowy clifts
Did send a dismal sheen:
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken—
The ice was all between.

The ice was here, the ice was there,
60 The ice was all around:
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,
Like noises in a swound!

Till a great
sea-bird,
called the
Albatross,
came
through the
snow-fog,
and was re-
ceived with
great joy and
hospitality.

At length did come an Albatross:
Thorough the fog it came;
65 As if it had been a Christian soul,
We hailed it in God's name.

It ate the food it ne'er had eat,
And round and round it flew.
The ice did split with a thunder-fit;
70 The helmsman steered us through!

And lo! the
Albatross
proveh a
bird of good
omen, and
followeth
the ship as

And a good south wind sprung up behind;
The Albatross did follow,
And every day, for food or play,
Came to the mariners' hollo!

55. **And through the drifts.** The probable meaning is that the snow-capped icebergs sent a dreary light through the drifting mist and snow, or shed a "dismal sheen" upon the drifting ice-packs.—**the snowy clifts.** *Clifts* is a secondary form of *cliffs*, and probably influenced by *cleft*, a secondary form of *cleft*.

56. **sheen.** Derive the word. Cf. line 314 for its use as an adjective

57. **ken** = *to see*. More commonly a noun.

61. Note the onomatopœic effect.

64. **Thorough** = *through*. Cf. *thoroughfare*.

69. **thunder-fit.** A noise resembling thunder.

In mist or cloud, on mast or shroud,
 It perched for vespers nine;
 Whiles all the night, through fog-smoke
 white,
 Glimmered the white moon-shine."

75 it returned
 northward,
 through fog
 and floating
 ice.

"God save thee, ancient Mariner!
 From the fiends, that plague thee thus!—
 Why look'st thou so?"—"With my crossbow
 I shot the Albatross.

The ancient
 Mariner
 80 inhospitably
 killeth the
 pious bird of
 good omen.

PART II

The sun now rose upon the right:
 Out of the sea came he,
 Still hid in mist, and on the left
 Went down into the sea.

85

And the good south wind still blew behind,
 But no sweet bird did follow,
 Nor any day, for food or play,
 Came to the mariners' hollo!

90

And I had done a hellish thing,
 And it would work 'em woe:
 For all averred, I had killed the bird
 That made the breeze to blow!

His ship-
 mates cry
 out against
 the ancient
 Mariner, for
 killing the
 bird of good
 luck.

76. **vespers** = *evenings*. Latin *vesper*, evening star, evening.
 Cf.: "Black vesper's pageants."
 Shakespeare, *Antony and Cleopatra*, IV, xiv, 8.

77. **Whiles**. Cf. the adverbial "s" of *eftsoons*, line 12. It is an archaic ballad form.

79. **God save thee**. The dramatic force of the interruption gives added intensity to the confession wrung from the Mariner. What does the story gain by the character of the Wedding-Guest?

83. **The Sun now rose**. The course of the vessel is indicated by the same poetic expedient as above in lines 25 f.

95 Ah, wretch! said they, the bird to slay,
That made the breeze to blow!

But when
the fog
cleared off,
they justify
the same,
and thus
make them-
selves ac-
complices in
the crime.

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,
The glorious Sun uprist:
Then all av'rr'd, I had killed the bird
That brought the fog and mist.
'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,
That bring the fog and mist.

The fair
breeze con-
tinues; the
ship enters
the Pacific
Ocean, and
sails north-
ward, even
until it
reaches the
Line.

The fair breeze blew, the white foam flew,
The furrow followed free;
105 We were the first that ever burst
Into that silent sea.

The ship
hath been
suddenly
becalm'd.

Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,
'Twas sad as sad could be;
And we did speak only to break
110 The silence of the sea!

All in a hot and copper sky,
The bloody Sun, at noon,
Right up above the mast did stand,
No bigger than the Moon.

115 Day after day, day after day,
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;

97. **head.** State the grammatical relation of this word. Why did the sun previously rise "dim and red"?

98. **uprist**=*uprose*. A Chaucerian form, and usually employed as a substantive.

101. The crew render themselves accomplices in crime.

103 f. Note the alliteration throughout this stanza.

107. **the sails dropt down.** This does not mean that they were lowered, for see lines 311, 312.

111-115. Note the accuracy and minuteness of the observation.

115. **Day after day.** What force does the repetition give to this passage? Cf. lines 119, 121, 125, 143 f., etc.

As idle as a painted ship
Upon a painted ocean.

Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water, everywhere,
Nor any drop to drink.

And the
Albatross
120 begins to be
avenged.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!
That ever this should be!
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs
Upon the slimy sea.

125

About, about, in reel and rout
The death fires danced at night;
The water, like a witch's oils,
Burnt green, and blue, and white.

130

And some in dreams assurèd were
Of the spirit that plagued us so:
Nine fathom deep he had followed us
From the land of mist and snow.

A Spirit had
followed
them: one of
the invisible
inhabitants
of this plan-
et, neither
departed
souls nor

angels; concerning whom the learned Jew, Josephus, and the Platonic Constantinopolitan, Michael Psellus, may be consulted. They are very numerous, and there is no climate or element without one or more.

And every tongue, through utter drought, 135
Was withered at the root;
We could not speak, no more than if
We had been choked with soot.

Ah! well-a-day! what evil looks
Had I from old and young!

The Ship-
mates in
140 their sore

120. **And all the boards.** *And* is here equivalent to *and yet*.
Cf.: "Have I a tongue to doom my brother's death,
And shall that tongue give pardon to a slave?"
Shakespeare, *Richard III*, II, i.

133. fathom. Parse.

distress
would fain
throw the
whole guilt
on the
ancient
Mariner: in
sign whereof
they hang
the dead sea-
bird round
his neck

Instead of the cross, the Albatross
About my neck was hung.

PART III

There passed a weary time. Each throat
Was parched, and glazed each eye.
145 A weary time! a weary time!

The ancient
Mariner
beholdeth a
sign in the
element afar
off.

How glazed each weary eye,
When looking westward, I beheld
A something in the sky.

At first it seemed a little speck,
150 And then it seemed a mist:
It moved and moved, and took at last
A certain shape, I wist.

A speck, a mist, a shape, I wist!
And still it neared and neared:
155 As if it dodged a water-sprite,
It plunged and tacked and veered.

At its nearer
approach, it
seemeth him
to be a ship;
and at a dear
ransom he
freeth his
speech from
the bonds of
thirst.

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
We could nor laugh nor wail;
Through utter drought all dumb we stood!
160 I bit my arm, I sucked the blood,
And cried, A sail! a sail!

With throats unslaked, with black lips baked,
Agape they heard me call:

152. **wist** = *know*. (Cf. *I throw*.)

155. **dodged**. Comment on the use of the word here. Is it dignified? What, in brief, was Wordsworth's theory of poetic diction?—**water-sprite**. *Sprite* is a doublet of *spirit*.

157. **with black lips baked**. Explain the appropriateness of the labials.

Gramercy! they for joy did grin,
And all at once their breath drew in,
As they were drinking all.

A flash of
joy;
165

See! See! (I cried) she tacks no more!
Hither to work us weal;
Without a breeze, without a tide,
She steadies with upright keel!

And horror
follows.
For can it
be a ship
that comes
onward
170 without
wind or tide?

The western wave was all aflame,
The day was well-nigh done!
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright Sun;
When that strange shape drove suddenly 175
Betwixt us and the Sun.

And straight the Sun was flecked with bars,
(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)
As if through a dungeon-grate he peered
With broad and burning face.

It seemeth
him but the
skeleton of
a ship.

180

Alas! (thought I, and my heart beat loud)
How fast she nears and nears!
Are those her sails that glance in the Sun,
Like restless gossameres?

Are those her ribs through which the Sun
Did peer, as through a grate?

And its ribs
185 are seen as
bars on the
face of the

164. **Gramercy** = French *grand merci*, great thanks. An exclamation expressive of gratitude mingled with surprise.

166. **As they**. Supply the ellipsis.

170. **She steadies**, etc. She sails on an even keel.

179, 180. Develop the force of the simile.

182. **How fast**, etc. The repetition expresses the relentless approach of the phantom ship.

184. **gossameres** = fine-spun cecidid webs. Literally = goose-summers, alluding to the downy appearance of the film, and to the time of its appearance.

185 f. The gruesomeness of detail in the 1798 text was largely eliminated in the revision.

setting Sun.
The Spectre-woman
and her
Death-mate, and
no other on
board the
skeleton-
ship.

Like vessel,
like crew!

Death and
Life-in-
Death have
diced for the
ship's crew,
and she
(the latter)
winneth the
ancient
Mariner.

No twilight 200
within the
courts of the
Sun.

At the rising
of the Moon,

And is that Woman all her crew?
Is that a Death? and are there two?
Is Death that woman's mate?

190 Her lips were red, her looks were free,
Her locks were yellow as gold:
Her skin was as white as leprosy,
The Night-mare Life-in-Death was she,
Who thicks man's blood with cold.

195 The naked hulk alongside came,
And the twain were casting dice;
'The game is done! I've won! I've won!'
Quoth she, and whistles thrice.

The Sun's rim dips; the stars rush out:
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper, o'er the sea,
Off shot the spectre-bark.

We listened and looked sideways up!
Fear at my heart, as at a cup,
205 My life-blood seemed to sip!
The stars were dim, and thick the night,
The steersman's face by his lamp gleamed
white;

From the sails the dew did drip—
Till clomb above the eastern bar
210 The horned Moon, with one bright star
Within the nether tip.

198. and whistles thrice. Whistling at sea brings on a storm, according to the superstition.

199, 200. The sudden closing in of night within the tropics is magnificently described in two brief lines.

204, 205. Fear at my heart, etc. Discuss the trope.

211. Within the nether tip. What poetic license exists here?

One after one, by the star-dogged Moon,
Too quick for groan or sigh,
Each turned his face with a ghastly pang,
And cursed me with his eye.

One after
another,

215

Four times fifty living men,
(And I heard nor sigh nor groan)
With heavy thump, a lifeless lump,
They dropped down one by one.

His ship-
mates drop
down dead.

The souls did from their bodies fly—
They fled to bliss or woe!
And every soul, it passed me by,
Like the whizz of my cross-bow!"

220 But Life-in-
Death
begins her
work on
the ancient
Mariner.

PART IV

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribbed sea-sand.

The Wed-
ding-Guest
225 feareth that
a Spirit is
talking to
him;

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand so brown."—

212 *by = under.*

213. **Too quick.** This has been explained according to its original meaning of "living," as in the expression "the quick and the dead." Anglo-Saxon *cwic*. It seems better to take it in its usual sense = *swiftly*, and to supply an ellipsis, such as, "they fell too *quick* for groan or sigh."

217. **Four times fifty.** A poetic periphrasis.

218. **thump: lump.** What is the effect of the rime?

223. **my cross-bow.** The events of the poem did not therefore occur after the sixteenth century. The souls in leaving the bodies make an angry sound in the Mariner's guilty ears.

224. **I fear thee**, etc. Compare the Wedding-Guest's interruptions now with those at the outset.

226, 227. Contributed by Wordsworth.

But the
ancient
Mariner
assureth
him of his
bodily life,
and proceed-
eth to relate
his horrible
penance.

230 "Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding-Guest!
This body dropt not down.
Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
235 My soul in agony.

He despiseth
the creatures
of the calm.

The many men so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Lived on; and so did I.

And envieth
that they
should live
and so many
lie dead.

240 I looked upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away;
I looked upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.
I looked to Heaven and tried to pray;
245 But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.
I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;

234. **Never a** = *not one*.

236. **The many men**, etc. His soul is full of reproach that Death should be so ruthless and wanton in his choice of victims, while sparing himself, the chief offender, and the debased creatures of the slime. There is no regeneration possible for the heart which harbors contempt or pride.

244. **I looked to Heaven**, etc. Why could the Mariner not pray? What spiritual significance may be attached to this? Cf. the King's speech in *Hamlet*:

"Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as will:
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent."
Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, III, iii.

245. **or ever** = *before ever*.

245-247. **gusht: dust**. Imperfect rime.

She sent the gentle sleep from Heaven, 295
That slid into my soul.

The silly buckets on the deck,
That had so long remained,
I dreamt that they were filled with dew;
And when I awoke, it rained. 300 with rain.

By grace of
the holy
Mother, the
ancient
Mariner is
refreshed

My lips were wet, my throat was cold,
My garments all were dank;
Sure I had drunken in my dreams,
And still my body drank.

I moved, and could not feel my limbs: 305
I was so light—almost
I thought that I had died in sleep,
And was a blessed ghost.

And soon I heard a roaring wind:
It did not come anear;
But with its sound it shook the sails,
That were so thin and sere.

He heareth
sounds,
310 and seeth
strange
sights and
commotions
in the sky
and the
element.

The upper air burst into life!
And a hundred fire-flags sheen,
To and fro they were hurried about! 315
And to and fro, and in and out,
The wan stars danced between.

297. *silly* = *blessed*. Shortened from early modern English *seely*, German *selig*.

300. *And when*, etc. Observe the metrical movement of this line.

303. *drunken*. Archaic as participle.

309 f. These strange commotions in Nature portend the re-animation of the lifeless bodies.

314. *fire-flags*. Poetical and archaic for *lightning*.—*sheen*. See line 56, note.

*The Albatross
is a large
black
bird*

And the coming wind did roar more loud,
And the sails did sigh like sedge;
320 And the rain poured down from one black
cloud;
The Moon was at its edge.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at its side:
Like waters shot from some high crag,
325 The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

*The bodies
of the ship's
crew are in-
spired and
the ship
moves on.*

The loud wind never reached the ship,
Yet now the ship moved on!
Beneath the lightning and the Moon
330 The dead men gave a groan.

They groaned, they stirred, they all uprose,
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;
It had been strange, even in a dream,
To have seen those dead men rise.

335 The helmsman steered, the ship moved on;
Yet never a breeze up blew;
The mariners all 'gan work the ropes,
Where they were wont to do;
They raised their limbs like lifeless tools—
340 We were a ghastly crew.

The body of my brother's son
Stood by me knee to knee:

318-326. c.f. the peaceful scene of 367 f.

321. **The Moon**, etc. Note the effective contrast.

322. **The thick**, etc. Comment on the verbal harmony of this line.

324-326. Discuss these lines as to meaning and form.

339-344. Note the intensity of the realism.

The body and I pulled at one rope,
But he said nought to me."—

"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!"

"Be calm, thou Wedding-Guest!

'Twas not those souls that fled in pain,
Which to their corpses came again,
But a troop of spirits blest:

For when it dawned—they dropped their ³⁵⁰
arms,

And clustered round the mast;

Sweet sounds rose slowly through their
mouths,

And from their bodies passed.

Around, around, flew each sweet sound,
Then darted to the Sun;

Slowly the sounds came back again, ³⁵⁵
Now mixed, now one by one.

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky
I heard the sky-lark sing;

Sometimes all little birds that are, ³⁶⁰
How they seemed to fill the sea and air
With their sweet jargoning!

And now 'twas like all instruments,

Now like a lonely flute;

And now it is an angel's song, ³⁶⁵
That makes the heavens be mute.

It ceased; yet still the sails made on
A pleasant noise till noon,

345 But not by
the souls of
the men, nor
by dæmons
of earth or
middle air,
but by a
blessed
troop of an-
gelic spirits,
sent down
by the in-
vocation of
the guard-
ian saint.

362. *jargoning*. Old French *jargon*, the singing of birds.
367-372. These lines, with their gentle melody, reveal Coleridge's power over the musical resources of our language. The words themselves have the murmuring flow of a hidden

A noise like of a hidden brook
 370 In the leafy month of June,
 That to the sleeping woods all night
 Singeth a quiet tune.

Till noon we quietly sailed on,
 Yet never a breeze did breathe:
 375 Slowly and smoothly went the ship,
 Moved onward from beneath.

The lone-
 some spirit
 from the
 south pole
 carries on
 the ship as
 far as the
 380 Line, in
 obedience to
 the angelic
 troop, but
 still requireth
 vengeance.

Under the keel nine fathom deep,
 From the land of mist and snow,
 The spirit slid: and it was he
 380 That made the ship to go.
 The sails at noon left off their tune,
 And the ship stood still also.

The Sun, right up above the mast,
 Had fixed her to the ocean:
 385 But in a minute she 'gan stir,
 With a short uneasy motion—
 Backwards and forwards half her length
 With a short uneasy motion.

Then like a pawing horse let go,
 390 She made a sudden bound;
 It flung the blood into my head,
 And I fell down in a swoond.

The Polar
 Spirit's fel-
 low-dæmons,
 the invisible
 inhabitants 395

How long in that same fit I lay,
 I have not to declare;
 But ere my living life returned,

brook. The peacefulness and continuity of the ship's motion could not be more felicitously described.

382. The South Polar Spirit can go no furth

394. **I have not**, etc. = I have not power to.

395. **living life**. In contrast with his former **Life in Death**.

I heard and in my soul discerned
Two voices in the air.

'Is it he?' quoth one, 'Is this the man?
By him who died on cross,
With his cruel blow he laid full low,
The harmless Albatross.

The spirit who bideth by himself
In the land of mist and snow,
He loved the bird that loved the man
Who shot him with his bow.'

The other was a softer voice,
As soft as honey-dew:
Quoth he, 'The man hath penance done,
And penance more will do.'

of the ele-
ment, take
part in his
wrong; and
two of them
relate, one
to the
other, that
penance
400 long and
heavy for
the ancient
Mariner
hath been
accorded
to the Polar
Spirit, who
returneth
southward.

405

PART VI

FIRST VOICE

'But tell me, tell me! speak again,
Thy soft response renewing—
What makes that ship drive on so fast?
What is the Ocean doing?'

410

SECOND VOICE

'Still as a slave before his lord,
The Ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the Moon is cast—

415

397. **Two voices.** These voices probably represent Justice and Mercy. Justify this statement.

407. **honey-dew.** Drops of sugary substance found on the leaves and stems of plants.

If he may know which way to go;
 For she guides him smooth or grim.
 420 See, brother, see! how graciously
 She looketh down on him.'

FIRST VOICE

The Mariner
 hath been
 cast into a
 trance; for
 the angelic
 power caus-
 eth the ves-
 sel to drive
 northward
 faster than
 human life
 could en-
 dure.

'But why drives on that ship so fast,
 Without or wave or wind?'

SECOND VOICE

The Super-
 natural
 motion is
 retarded;
 the Mariner
 awakes, and
 his penance
 begins anew.

'The air is cut away before,
 425 And closes from behind.

Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!
 Or we shall be belated:
 For slow and slow that ship will go,
 When the Mariner's trance is abated.'

The Super-
 natural
 motion is
 retarded;
 the Mariner
 awakes, and
 his penance
 begins anew.

430 I woke, and we were sailing on
 As in a gentle weather:
 'Twas night, calm night, the Moon was high,
 The dead men stood together.

All stood together on the deck,
 435 For a charnel-dungeon fitter:
 All fixed on me their stony eyes,
 That in the Moon did glitter.

The pang, the curse, with which they died,
 Had never passed away:
 440 I could not draw my eyes from theirs,
 Nor turn them up to pray.

The curse
 is finally
 expiated.

And now this spell was snapt: once more
 I viewed the ocean green,

And looked far forth, yet little saw
Of what had else been seen—

445

Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows, a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.

450

But soon there breathed a wind on me,
Nor sound nor motion made:
Its path was not upon the sea,
In ripple or in shade.

455

It raised my hair, it fanned my cheek
Like a meadow-gale of spring—
It mingled strangely with my fears,
Yet it felt like a welcoming.

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too:
Sweetly, sweetly blew the breeze—
On me alone it blew.

460

Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The light-house top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?

And the
ancient
465 Mariner
beholdeth
his native
country.

452. **But soon**, etc. Compare this with the wind described in lines 309 f.

457. **Like a meadow-gale of spring**. A sea-image redolent of the land and memories of home. Write a note on the descriptions of Nature in this poem.

458. **It mingled strangely**, etc. The Mariner is not quite sure whether to dread this wind or not. He remembers his former experience.

464 f. Compare lines 21 f. The evolution of the poem is completed.

We drifted o'er the harbor-bar,
 And I with sobs did pray—
 470 O let me be awake, my God !
 Or let me sleep away.

The harbor-bay was clear as glass,
 So smoothly it was strewn !
 And on the bay the moonlight lay,
 475 And the shadow of the Moon.

The rock shone bright, the kirk no less,
 That stands above the rock :
 The moonlight steeped in silentness
 The steady weathercock.

480 And the bay was white with silent light,
 Till rising from the same,
 Full many shapes, that shadows were,
 In crimson colors came.

The angelic
 spirits leave
 the dead
 bodies,

And appear
 in their own
 forms of
 light.

A little distance from the prow
 485 Those crimson shadows were :
 I turned my eyes upon the deck—
 Oh, Christ ! what saw I there !

Each corse lay flat, lifeless and flat,
 And, by the holy rood !
 490 A man all light, a seraph-man,
 On every corse there stood.

478. **steeped in silentness.** The peacefulness of this scene, in marked contrast with the unrest which had gone before, is reiterated in the next line of this stanza, and in the stanza which follows, e.g., line 479, *The steady weathercock*, and line 480, *with silent light*.

482, 483.

that shadows were
 In crimson colors.

Note the forcible antithesis. Point out other examples of verbal antithesis in *The Ancient Mariner*, and of color contrasts in general.

489. **And, by the holy rood !** A ballad oath. **rood** = *cross*.

This seraph-band, each waved his hand :
 It was a heavenly sight !
 They stood as signals to the land,
 Each one a lovely light ;

493

This seraph-band, each waved his hand ;
 No voice did they impart—
 No voice ; but oh ! the silence sank
 Like music on my heart.

But soon I heard the dash of oars,
 I heard the Pilot's cheer ;
 My head was turned perforce away,
 And I saw a boat appear.

500

The Pilot and the Pilot's boy,
 I heard them coming fast :
 Dear Lord in Heaven ! it was a joy
 The dead men could not blast.

506

I saw a third—I heard his voice :
 It is the Hermit good !
 He singeth loud his godly hymne
 That he makes in the wood.
 He'll shrive my soul, he'll wash away
 The Albatross's blood.

510

PART VII

This Hermit good lives in that wood
 Which slopes down to the sea.

The Hermit
 of the
 515 Wood.

502. **My head**, etc. The angelic power constrained him.

512. **shrieve**. An obsolete form of *shrive*.

Part VII. The transition is made to normal conditions.

514. **This Hermit good**. It is especially appropriate that the Mariner's sin should be absolved by one enveloped in sanctity. The student should indicate by reference to the character which Coleridge intended to bestow upon the Hermit.

How loudly his sweet voice he rears !
 He loves to talk with marineres
 That come from a far countree.

He kneels at morn, and noon, and eve—
 520 He hath a cushion plump :
 It is the moss that wholly hides
 The rotted old oak-stump.

The skiff-boat neared : I heard them talk,
 ' Why this is strange, I trow !
 525 Where are those lights so many and fair,
 That signal made but now ? '

Approacheth
 the ship with
 wonder.

' Strange, by my faith ! ' the Hermit said—
 ' And they answered not our cheer '
 The planks look warped ! and see those sails
 530 How thin they are and sere !
 I never saw aught like to them,
 Unless perchance it were

Brown skeletons of leaves that lag
 My forest brook along ;
 535 When the ivy-tod is heavy with snow,
 And the owlet whoops to the wolf below
 That eats the she-wolf's young. '

519-522. Develop the ironical force of this stanza.

525. **Where are**, etc. Cf. lines 494, 495.

530. **How thin**, etc. Cf. line 312.

532. Observe the *enjambement* or run-on line from one stanza to the next.

533. **Brown skeletons**, etc. Show how this simile is especially natural here. How do lines 535-537 affect the simile ?

535. **ivy-tod**. A thick bush, usually of ivy.

537. **That eats**. What is the antecedent of "that" ?

'Dear Lord! it hath a fiendish look—
(The Pilot made reply)
I am a-feared'—'Push on, push on!'
Said the Hermit cheerily.

540

The boat came closer to the ship,
But I nor spake nor stirred;
The boat came close beneath the ship,
And straight a sound was heard.

545

Under the water it rumbled on,
Still louder and more dread:
It reached the ship, it split the bay;
The ship went down like lead.

The ship
suddenly
sinketh.

Stunned by the loud and dreadful sound,
Which sky and ocean smote,
Like one that hath been seven days drowned
My body lay afloat;
But swift as dreams, myself I found
Within the Pilot's boat.

550 The ancient
Mariner is
saved in the
Pilot's boat.

555

Upon the whirl, where sank the ship,
The boat spun round and round;
And all was still, save that the hill
Was telling of the sound.

I moved my lips—the Pilot shrieked
And fell down in a fit;

560

540. **a-feared.** Distinguish carefully by derivations *a-feared* and *afraid*.

549. **The ship went down like lead.** This line is a striking example at once of the simplicity and economy of Coleridge's diction. A reference to the introduction will show that the original vice of his style was turgidity and diffuseness. Was Coleridge justified in thus getting rid of his ship?

558, 559. **And all was still,** etc. This is a Wordsworthian touch. Examine the passages in this poem which describe sound. Do they argue delicacy of perception?

The holy Hermit raised his eyes,
And prayed where he did sit.

I took the oars : the Pilot's boy,
565 Who now doth crazy go,
Laughed loud and long, and all the while
His eyes went to and fro.
' Ha, ha ! ' quoth he, ' full plain I see,
The Devil knows how to row.'

570 And now, all in my own countree,
I stood on the firm land !
The Hermit stepped forth from the boat,
And scarcely he could stand.

The ancient
Mariner
earnestly
entreateth
the Hermit
to shrieve
him ; and the
penance of
life falls on
him.

' O, shrieve me, shrieve me, holy man ! ' "
575 The Hermit crossed his brow.
' Say quick, ' quoth he, ' I bid thee say—
What manner of man art thou ? ' "

Forthwith this frame of mine was wrenched
With a woful agony,
580 Which forced me to begin my tale ;
And then it left me free.

And ever
and anon
throughout
his future
life an agony
constraineth
him to travel
from land to
land.

Since then, at an uncertain hour,
That agony returns ;
And till my ghastly tale is told,
585 This heart within me burns.

I pass, like night, from land to land ;
I have strange power of speech ;

564-567. **I took the oars**, etc. We have here one of the many inimitable touches in the poem. The quiet unobtrusive line, which tells of the Pilot's boy "who now doth crazy go," reveals with startling force the terrifying aspect of the Mariner.

586. Discuss the simile.

NOTES ON THE ANCIENT MARINER

The poem was first printed anonymously in the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1798, with the title, *The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere, in Seven Parts*, and a brief prose argument prefixed. The second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1800, contained many important alterations in the text, besides a consistent modernizing of the antiquated spelling. The Argument was extended as follows: "How a Ship having first sailed to the Equator, was driven by storms to the cold Country towards the South Pole; how the Ancient Mariner, cruelly and in contempt of the laws of hospitality, killed a Sea-bird; and how he was followed by many strange Judgments; and in what manner he came back to his own Country." The poem was again reprinted in *Lyrical Ballads*, 1802 and 1805, without much change from the text of 1800, but with the omission of the Argument. Further changes were made in the poem before its next appearance in the *Sibylline Leaves*, 1817, when the marginal gloss and the motto from Burnet were also added. Subsequent editions before and after the poet's death contained no modifications worthy of note.

Facile Credo. etc. "I can easily believe that there are more Invisible than Visible beings in the Universe, . . . but who shall declare to us the family of all these, and acquaint us with the Agreements, Differences, and peculiar Talents which are to be found among them? [What is their work? Where are their dwelling-places?] It is true, Human Wit has always desired a knowledge of these things, though it has never yet attained it. . . . I will own that it is very profitable, some times to contemplate in the Mind, as in a Draught, the Image of the greater and better World; lest the Soul, being accustomed to the Trifles of this present Life, should contract itself too much, and altogether rest

in mean Cogitations ; but, in the mean Time, we must take Care to keep to the Truth, and observe Moderation, that we may distinguish Certain from Uncertain Things, and Day from night. "

The origin of *The Ancient Mariner* was described by Wordsworth to Miss Fenwick as follows : " In the autumn of 1797 [November] he (Coleridge), my sister, and myself started from Alfoxden pretty late in the afternoon with a view to visit Linton and the Valley of Stones, near to it. Accordingly we set off and proceeded along the Quantock Hills towards Watchet, and in the course of this walk was planned the poem of *The Ancient Mariner*, founded on a dream, as Mr. Coleridge said, of his friend Mr. Cruikshank. Much the greatest part of the story was Mr. Coleridge's invention, but certain parts I suggested; for example, some crime was to be committed which should bring upon the Old Navigator, as Coleridge afterwards delighted to call him, the spectral persecution, as a consequence of that crime and his own wanderings. I had been reading in Shelvocke's *Voyages* a day or two before that, while doubling Cape Horn, they frequently saw albatrosses in that latitude, the largest sort of sea-fowl, some extending their wings twelve or thirteen feet. 'Suppose,' said I, 'you represent him as having killed one of these birds on entering the South Sea, and that the tutelary spirits of these regions take upon them to avenge the crime.' The incident was thought fit for the purpose and adopted accordingly. I also suggested the navigation of the ship by the dead men, but do not recollect that I had anything more to do with the scheme of the poem. The gloss with which it was subsequently accompanied was not thought of by either of us at the time, at least not a hint of it was given to me, and I have no doubt it was a gratuitous afterthought. We began the composition together on that, to me, memorable evening. I furnished two or three lines at the beginning of the poem, in particular,

{ "And listen'd like a three year's child :
The Mariner had his will. "

"These trifling contributions, all but one, which Mr. Coleridge has with unnecessary scrupulosity recorded, slipped out of his mind, as well they might. As we endeavored to proceed conjointly (I speak of the same evening), our respective manners proved so widely different that it would have been quite presump-

tucus in me to do anything but separate from an undertaking upon which I could only have been a clog."

For Coleridge's more philosophical account of the genesis of the poem we must turn to the fourteenth chanter of the *Biographia Literaria*—

"During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbors, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of Nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colors of the imagination. The sudden charm, which accidents of light and shade, which moonlight or sunset, diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of Nature. The thought suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and the agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being, who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them when they present themselves.

"In this idea originated the plan of the *Lyrical Ballads*, in which it was agreed that my endeavors should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for

which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.

"With this view I wrote the *The Ancient Mariner*, and was preparing among other poems, the *Dark Ladie* and the *Christabel*, in which I should have more nearly realized my ideal than I had done in my first attempt. But Mr. Wordsworth's industry had proved so much more successful and the number of his poems so much greater, that my compositions, instead of forming a balance, appeared rather an interpolation of heterogeneous matter. Mr. Wordsworth added two or three poems, written in his own character, in the impassioned, lofty, and sustained diction which is characteristic of his genius. In this form the *Lyrical Ballads* were published."

We thus observe the serious aim which stimulated the poet to the production of *The Ancient Mariner*. We do indeed receive the further hint that the immediate stimulus was the desire to earn five pounds, but that fact hardly comes within the scope of a literary inquiry. The external suggestions are very interesting. The dream of Coleridge's friend Cruikshank is responsible for the phantom ship; Wordsworth's suggestion, based upon a passage in Shelvocke's *Voyages*, is responsible for the albatross; and Wordsworth again claims responsibility for the navigation of the ship by dead men. Cruikshank's dream has faded beyond power of recovery, but Shelvocke's *Voyage round the World* is still sufficiently easy of access. The passage describing the coast of Patagonia is as follows: "These (Pintado birds) were accompanied by *Albatrosses*, the largest sort of sea-fowl some of them extending their wings twelve or thirteen feet." The superstitious fear attaching to the albatross as a bird of ill omen is described in another passage. Cape Horn has been rounded and Captain Shelvocke continues as follows: "One would think it impossible that anything living could subsist in so rigid a climate; and indeed we all observed that we had not had the sight of one fish of any kind, since we were come to the southward of the straits of *le Mair*, nor one sea-bird, except a disconsolate black *Albatross*, who accompanied us for several days, hovering about us as if lost himself, till Hatley (my second Captain), observing, in one of his melancholy fits, that the bird was always hovering near us, imagined from its color, that it might be some ill omen. That

which, I suppose, induced him the more to encourage his superstition, was the continued series of contrary tempestuous winds which had oppress'd us ever since we had got into this sea. But be that as it would, after some fruitless attempts, at length, he shot the *Albatross*, not doubting (perhaps) that we should have a fair wind after it."

We may accept Wordsworth's statement that he suggested to Coleridge the navigation of the mariner's ship by dead men. But the idea of revivifying them by a troop of angelic spirits was, according to a writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for October, 1853, borrowed from a tale of shipwreck narrated by Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, in the fourth century. The old sailor of the story was a solitary survivor of a ship's crew. He lived in great peril and agony alone upon the sea for many days; but forthwith the ship was navigated by a "crew of angels," and "steered by the Pilot of the World to the Lucanian shore"; the fishermen there saw a crew, whom they took for soldiers, and fled, but returned again when the old man showed them that he was alone and towed him into harbor.

Finally, the *Athenæum* for March 15th, 1890, contains a review of a book by Mr. Ivor James, *The Source of the Ancient Mariner*. The claim is here urged that Coleridge owed a great deal, especially in the nature of description, to an old book by a Captain Thomas James called the *Strange and Dangerous Voyage in his intended Discovery of the Northwest Passage into the South Sea*: London, 1633. Mr. Dykes Campbell considers it probable that Coleridge did, in fact, casually consult this book, and in the notes reference will be made to the possible borrowings, slight though they are. It is curious that this old book, contains the idea of being brought home in a dream or trance, but this point Mr. James has overlooked. "For mine owne part, I give no credit to them at all; and as little to the vicious, and abusive wits of later *Portingals* and *Spaniards*: who never speak of any difficulties (i. e., in returning from the South Sea): as shoalde water, ice, nor sight of land: but as if they had been brought home in a dreame or engine." In this connection, Mr. Dykes Campbell refers to Part VI of *The Ancient Mariner*, and quotes the marginal gloss: "The Mariner hath been cast into a trance: for the angelic power causeth the vessel to drive northward faster than human life could endure." //

The Ancient Mariner was a puzzle to the critics of Coleridge's day, and a perplexing problem even to his own friends. Southey, impatient of its element of the marvellous, called it in *The Critical Review* "a Dutch attempt at German sublimity." *The New Monthly* characterized it as "the strangest cock and bull story that ever we saw." Wordsworth laid the blame on it for the failure of the *Lyrical Ballads*, and upon Coleridge's desire to withdraw it from the second edition wrote the following patronizing note:

Note to the Ancient Mariner.—"I can not refuse myself the gratification of informing such Readers as may have been pleased with this Poem, or with any part of it, that they owe their pleasure in some sort to me; as the Author was himself very desirous that it should be suppressed. This wish had arisen from a consciousness of the defects of the Poem, and from a knowledge that many persons have been much displeased with it. The Poem of my Friend has indeed great defects; first that the principal person has no distinct character, either in his profession of Mariner, or as a human being, who having been long under the control of supernatural impressions, might be supposed himself to partake of something supernatural; secondly, that he does not act, but is continually acted upon; thirdly, that the events, having no necessary connection, do not produce each other; and lastly, that the imagery is somewhat too laboriously accumulated. Yet the Poem contains many delicate touches of passion, and indeed the passion is everywhere true to nature; a great number of the stanzas present beautiful images, and are expressed with unusual felicity of language; and the versification, tho' the metre is itself unfit for long poems, is harmonious and artfully varied, exhibiting the utmost powers of that metre, and every variety of which it is capable. It therefore appeared to me that these several merits (the first of which, namely, that of the passion, is of the highest kind) gave to the Poem a value which is not often possessed by better Poems. On this account I requested of my Friend to permit me to republish it."

Kills the
Albatross!!

This complacent criticism drew from Lamb the following letter by way of rebuke:

"For me I was never so affected with any human tale. After first reading it I was totally possessed with it for many days. I dislike all the miraculous part of it, but the feelings of the man

under the operation of such scenery dragged me along like Tom Pipe's magic whistle. I totally differ from your idea that the Mariner should have had a character and profession. This is a beauty in *Gulliver's Travels*, where the mind is kept in a placid state of little wonderments; but the Ancient Mariner undergoes such trials as overwhelm and bury all individuality or memory of what he was—like the state of a man in a bad dream, one terrible peculiarity of which is, that all consciousness of personality is gone. Your other observation is, I think as well, a little unfounded. The Mariner, from being conversant in supernatural events, has acquired a supernatural and strange cast of phrase, eye appearance, etc., which frighten the wedding guest. You will excuse my remarks, because I am hurt and vexed that you should think it necessary, with a prose apology, to open the eyes of dead men that cannot see."

PART I

The struggle of the Wedding-Guest against the overmastering influence of the Mariner is here depicted, and the ultimate surrender to his magnetic sway. Sounds from the outer world obtrude themselves in the opening stanzas, but before the close they fall idly on the ears of the Wedding-Guest. The spell of the weird story is upon him. An exquisite poetic effect is gained in lines 30 f. by the image of the bride as she paced into the hall: but the spell remains unbroken. It will be observed that the interruptions of the Wedding-Guest at the outset are impatient, and for the purpose of thwarting the narrative. The interruptions which follow are the result of fear and fascination.

We need not spoil the simple beauty of the poem by the premature intrusion of philosophical interpretations. Let the student first read the poem for the delight in reading it, and when the hour for reflection comes an added pleasure will doubtless accrue, for some minds at least, from the discovery of hidden spiritual meanings, even at the risk of making the poem more difficult than it was meant to be. For a brief discussion of this question of philosophical significance, see opening note to Part VII.

1. **ancient.** The word usually suggests time long past. In the poem the action probably relates to a remote period, but the

word itself here rather refers to the advanced age of the narrator—the Old Navigator, as Coleridge loved to call him. “It was a delicate thought to put the weird tale, not into the author’s own mouth, but into that of an ancient mariner, who relates it with dreamy recollection.”—Brandl, page 202.

2. **one of three.** Three and seven are mystic numbers, and seem for that reason adopted throughout the poem; e. g.:

“And listens like a three years’ child.” (Line 15.)

“Quoth she, and whistles thrice.” (Line 198.)

“Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse.” (Line 261.)

3. **By thy long gray beard.** Observe the art of this indirect description involved in the progress of the narrative. Compare other instances of personal description in the poem, especially lines 79 f., where the agony on the Mariner’s face is reflected in the terrified words of the Wedding-Guest. The custom of swearing by the beard is not uncommon in old literature.

Touch. “Swear by your beards that I am a knave.

Cel. By our beards, if we had them, thou art.”

Shakespeare, *As You Like It*, I, ii.

11. **loon.** Not to be confused with *loon* (a corruption of *loom*), the name of an aquatic bird. This is the explanation usually given. Our present word is Middle English *lowne*, meaning “a stupid fellow.” Cf.

“The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon!”

Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, V, iii.

13. **He holds him**, etc. Observe the repetition of the phrase, *He holds him*, from line 9, and notice the constant effective repetitions throughout. Repetition is extremely common in ballad literature, but even in other poems than *The Ancient Mariner* it had developed into a mannerism with Coleridge. Compare also Edgar Allan Poe.

21 f. For the joyousness of a ship’s departure compare Tennyson’s *The Voyage*.

The evolution of Coleridge’s poem is very perfect. In line 465 the return to the old familiar landmarks brings joy to the old man’s heart:

“Oh! dream of joy! is this indeed
The light-house top I see?
Is this the hill? is this the kirk?
Is this mine own countree?”

23. **kirk.** This is the northern form still surviving in Scotland of the Anglo-Saxon *cyric*, which became *church* in Midland and Southern English. It is significant, in view of the occasional touches of Northern dialect in *The Ancient Mariner*, to note that the borderland was the primitive home of the ballad. "There is scarcely an old historical song or ballad, wherein a minstrel or harper appears, but he is characterized by way of eminence to have been 'of the north countrye.'"—Percy, *Essay on the Ancient Minstrelsy*.

25 f. Note the naked simplicity of this description. Lowell has very ably analyzed the charm of Coleridge's descriptions in the following passage, the excellence of which is an excuse for its length: "Coleridge has taken the old ballad measure and given to it, by an indefinable charm wholly his own, all the sweetness, all the melody and compass of a symphony. And how picturesque it is in the proper sense of the word. I know nothing like it. There is not a description in it. It is all picture. Descriptive poets generally confuse us with multiplicity of detail; we can not see their forest for the trees; but Coleridge never errs in this way. With instinctive tact he touches the right chord of association, and is satisfied, as we also are. I should find it hard to explain the singular charm of his diction, there is so much nicety of art and purpose in it, whether for music or meaning. Nor does it need any explanation, for we all feel it. The words seem common words enough, but in the order of them, in the choice, variety, and position of the vowel sounds, they become magical. The most decrepit vocable in the language throws away its crutches to dance and sing at his piping. I can not think it a personal peculiarity, but a matter of universal experience, that more bits of Coleridge have imbedded themselves in my memory than of any other poet who delighted my youth—unless I should except the sonnets of Shakespeare. This argues perfectness of expression. Let me cite an example or two:

'The Sun's rim dips, the stars rush out,
At one stride comes the dark;
With far-heard whisper o'er the sea
Off shot the spectre barque.'

Or take this as a bit of landscape:

'Beneath yon birch with silver bark
And boughs so pendulous and fair,

The brook falls scattered down the rock,
And all is mossy there.'

It is a perfect little picture, and seems so easily done. But try to do something like it. Coleridge's words have the unashamed nakedness of Scripture, of the Eden of diction ere the voluble serpent had entered it. This felicity of speech in Coleridge's best verse is the more remarkable because it was an acquisition. His earlier poems are apt to be turgid; in his prose there is too often a languor of profuseness, and there are pages where he seems to be talking to himself and not to us, as I have heard a guide do in the tortuous caverns of the Catacombs when he was doubtful if he had not lost his way. But when his genius runs freely and full in his prose, the style, as he said of Pascal, 'is a garment of light.' He knew all our best prose and knew the secret of its composition. When he is well inspired, as in his best poetry he commonly is, he gives us the very quintessence of perception, the clearly crystallized precipitation of all that is most precious in the ferment of impression after the impertinent and obtrusive particulars have evaporated from the memory. It is the pure visual ecstasy disengaged from the confused and confusing material that gave it birth. It seems the very beatitude of artless simplicity, and is the most finished product of art. I know nothing so perfect in its kind since Dante."—Lowell, *Works*, vol. vi, pp. 74, 75.

Coleridge's power as a descriptive poet is touched upon elsewhere (see pages 47 f.). Simplicity is everywhere its prevailing quality, and an effort should be made to impress this upon the student by textual reference. In this stanza the loneliness which suddenly enveloped the ship is impressively conveyed.

32. **the loud bassoon.** Mr. Dykes Campbell has the following note on this: "During Coleridge's residence at Stowey his friend Poole reformed the church choir, and added a bassoon to its resources. Mrs. Sanford (*T. Poole and his Friends*, i, 247) happily suggests that this 'was the very original and prototype of the *loud bassoon* whose sound moved the Wedding-Guest to beat his breast.'"

34. **Red as a rose.** A common comparison in ballads, where alliterative similes and expressions are very frequent; e.g., "green as . . . glass," *Lin.*, 10; "green as . . . grass," *Maur.*, 7. Cf. also,

"Her cheeks were like the roses red."

Dowsabell, line 92 (*Percy's Reliques*).

"His lippen reed as rose."

Chaucer, *The Tale of Sir Thopas*.

51-70. **And now there came**, etc. Mr. Ivor James in the *Athenæum* for March 15, 1890, quotes a number of parallels from Captain James's *Northwest Passage*, as a proof that Coleridge drew some of his descriptions from that source (see also Dykes Campbell, *Coleridge's Works*, page 597).

62. **Like noises in a swound**. So (except *of* for *in*) in the 1798 edition. In 1800 the reading was,

"A wild and ceaseless sound."

The earlier reading was properly restored. The comparison of these muffled noises to the sound of the pulsing arteries in a condition of syncope is very expressive.—**swound**. Derived from *swoun* with excrescent *d*. Compare the "*d*" in *sound*, *round*.

67. **It ate the food it ne'er had eat**. The 1798 edition reads :

"The Mariners gave it biscuit-worms."

Do you consider the revised text the better reading?

PART II.

The gloss forms a sufficient commentary upon the progress of the story in this second part. The crime is accomplished, the wanton slaying of a harmless creature, and retribution follows swift behind. The Mariner is first blamed by his comrades, but when a fair breeze rises to speed them on their northward voyage they approve the deed, and thus become accomplices in crime. The fifth stanza is remarkable. The sudden stagnation that checks the ship's exultant speed offers a wonderful poetic contrast. Nothing could excel in its kind the description which follows.

87. **And the good south wind**. Cf. lines 91 and 92 for the use of "and" as an introductory word. It is a peculiarity of ballad diction; e. g. :

"And he cast a lease upon his backe,
And he rode to the silver wood,

And there he sought all about,
About the silver wood," etc.

Childe Maurice, Gummere, page 192.

92. 'em is not really a contraction of *them*, but a survival of Middle English *hem*, Anglo-Saxon *heom*, the dative plural of the third personal pronoun.

95 and 96, which balance lines 101 and 102, were not in the early editions.

104. **The furrow followed free.** Mr. Dykes Campbell has the following note upon this line: "In *Sibylline Leaves* the line was printed,

'The furrow streamed off free.'

And Coleridge put this footnote, 'In the former edition the line was,

'The furrow follow'd free.'

But I had not been long on board a ship before I perceived that this was the image as seen by a spectator from the shore, or from another vessel. From the ship itself the *wake* appears like a brook flowing off from the stern.' But in 1828 and after, the old line was restored." Justify your preference for either line.

117-118. The image contained in these lines is deservedly famous.

123-130. **The very deep did rot**, etc. This, with some allowance for poetic exaggeration, fairly accurately represents the condition of the sea in the tropics after a prolonged calm.

An earlier poem of Coleridge's contains lines which suggest line 125:

"What time after long and pestful calms,
With slimy shapes and miscreated life
Poisoning the vast Pacific"

Coleridge, *The Destiny of Nations*.

127. **About, about**, etc. There seems to be a hint in this passage of the witches' song in *Macbeth*:

"The weird sisters, hand in hand,
Posters of the sea and land,
Thus do go about, about."

Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, I, iii, 32 f.

128. **The death-fires.** "Among the superstitious this name, as also *corpse candles*, *dead men's candles* and *fetch-lights*, was given to certain phosphorescent lights that appeared to issue

from houses or arise from the ground. It was believed that they foretold death, and that the course they took marked out the road the dead body was to be carried for burial," etc.—Charlotte Latham, *Folk-lore Record*.

129. **like a witch's oils.** Oil used in incantations was mingled, in order to make the scene more impressive, with substances which produced a colored flame.

139. **well-a-day.** Altered by analogy with "day," from *wellaway*, Middle English *welaway*, Anglo-Saxon *wā lā wā*, an exclamation of distress, *wā*, woe; *lā*, lo; *wā*, woe. It is a very common ballad expression.

The Gloss. 131 f. **Josephus**, A.D. 37-100 (?). A celebrated Jewish historian. At the outbreak of the Judeo-Roman war he was appointed Governor of Galilee, and took an active part in the war. He afterwards entered into the service of the Emperors Vespasian and Titus. In Rome he composed the *History of the Jewish War*, in seven books, and also *The Antiquities of the Jews*.

Psellus, 1020-1110 (?), was born in Constantinople, where he was called the "Prince of Philosophers." His works are numerous, consisting of commentaries on Aristotle and treatises on the occult sciences. Coleridge has reference to his *Dialogue on the Operation of Demons*.

PART III.

The marvels accumulate in this third part, but, like the Wedding-Guest, we "can not choose but hear." The intensity with which the poet depicts the supernatural brings it vividly before our imagination, and "by sheer vividness of imagery, and terse vigor of descriptive phrase," he obtains our imaginative assent to the weird details of the narrative. We believe because we see.

143. **There passed**, etc. This third part has been subjected to the most conscientious and successful revision on the poet's part.

What is the special value of the repetition in the present text?

152. **I wist.** This has the appearance of being an archaic preterite from the preterite present verb *wit*, M. E. *witen*, A.-S. *witan*, to know; but it is more probably a corruption of A.-S.

gewiss, certainly, indeed, M. E. *ywiss*, *i-wiss*, which became *I wist* by confusion with the above preterite.

161. **A sail! a sail!** This ship suggests the famous "Flying Dutchman." "The original story is that of a Dutch captain who swore he would round Cape Horn against a head gale. The storm increased; he swore the louder; threw overboard those who tried to dissuade him; cursed God, and was condemned to sail on forever, without hope of port or respite."—Sykes.

164. **they for joy did grin.** "I took the thought of 'grinning for joy' from my companion's [Berdmore, of Jesus College, Cambridge] remark to me when we had climbed to the top of Plinlimmon, and were nearly dead with thirst. We could not speak, from the constriction, till we found a little puddle under a stone. He said to me, 'You grinned like an idiot!' He had done the same!"—*Table Talk*, May 13, 1830 (second edition).

178. **(Heaven's Mother send us grace!)** An imitation of old ballad refrains. These refrains were of different kinds, sometimes being quite meaningless and of the nature of a burden merely to mark time, as *Hey derry down, olilly lally*, etc. Sometimes again the words are articulate, but strung together with no apparent sense, as, for example, in *Riddles Wisely Expounded*:

"There was a Knicht riding frae the east—
Jennifer gentle and rosemarie—
Who had been wooing at monie a place—
As the dew flies over the mulberry tree."

And finally the refrain has sometimes more or less reference to the story as in *The Two Sisters*:

"He has ta'en three locks o' her yellow hair—
Binnorie, O Binnorie—
And wi' them strung his harp sae rare—
By the bonnie mill-dams of Binnorie."

Modern balladists have employed both the articulate and the meaningless refrain. As for the former, cf. Tennyson in *The Sisters*:

"We were two sisters of one race,
The wind is howling in turret and tree;
She was the fairer in the face,
O! the Earl was fair to see."

Jean Ingelow, and Rossetti in *Sister Helen*, *Troy Town*, *Eden Bower*, have by preference employed the latter, an affectation cleverly parodied by the late Mr. C. S. Calverley:

"The auld wife sat at her ivied door
(Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese),
A thing she had frequently done before;
And her spectacles lay on her aproned knees.

"The farmer's daughter hath soft brown hair.
(Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese).
And I met with a ballad, I can't say where,
Which wholly consisted of lines like these."

179, 180. Note the graphic force of the simile here. The stanza begins with a metaphorical allusion. Still, we are so accustomed to the term "bars," as applied to level lines of clouds, that the metaphor passes as a plain statement. The idea of bars, by the principle of association which is at the bottom of all great poetry, suggested the image of a dungeon grate, which by the same process of association led to the personification of the sun peering through its prison bars "with broad and burning face." The same idea is still working in the poet's mind in lines 185 f., but with a transferred reference to the vessel's hollow ribs instead of the low horizon clouds.

185 f. The changes from the original text of 1798 at this point are very radical.

In comparing the two full versions the toning down of the gruesome element is particularly to be noticed. The following words of Professor Dowden are apposite to this portion of the poem: "Relying largely, as he did in his poems which deal with the supernatural, on the effect produced by their psychological truth, Coleridge could afford to subdue the supernatural, and refine it to the utmost. . . . More important than truth physical he felt truth psychological to be. And attaining this, he did not need, as 'Monk' Lewis* did, to drag into his verse all the horrors of the churchyard and the nether pit of Hell. . . . Again, in *The Ancient Mariner*, where the spectre bark approaches the doomed ship, and the forms of Death and Life-in-Death are visible, playing at dice for the mariner and his companions, a verse

* A contemporary of Coleridge's and author of supernatural romances. His chief work, *The Monk*, accounts for his title.

full of charnel abominations occurs in the original text (two stanzas, in fact), which was afterwards judiciously omitted. Coleridge felt that these hideous incidents of the grave only detracted from the finer horror of the voluptuous beauty of his White Devil, the nightmare Life-in-Death."—Dowden, *New Studies in Literature*, page 338 f.

198. **And whistles thrice.** Whistling at sea is sure to bring on a storm, runs the sailors' superstition.

thrice, in addition to riming with "dice," is used for its superstitious significance. It is the favorite number for invocations.

"Thrice to the holly brake—

Thrice to the well—

I bid thee awake,

White Maid of Avenel!"

Scott, *The Monastery*.

201 f. The gruesomeness of the situation here reaches a climax.

210-211. **The horned Moon.** "It is a common superstition among sailors that something evil is about to happen whenever a star dogs the moon" (manuscript note by Coleridge). "But," adds Mr. Campbell, "no sailor ever saw a star within the nether tip of a horned moon." This error was not committed by Coleridge in the 1798 edition, where the reading is "Almost atween the tips."

222-223. **And every soul**, etc. The souls in leaving the bodies make an angry noise in the Mariner's guilty ears. It is superstitiously held that the soul may be seen and heard sometimes while leaving the body. Cf. Tennyson.:

"The gloomy brewer's [Cromwell's] soul
Went by me like a stork."

Tennyson, *The Talking Oak*, 55.

And Rossetti:

"And the souls mounting up to God
Went by her like thin flames."

Rossetti, *The Blessed Damozel*.

The impression of the supernatural conveyed by this and the following parts of the poem is skillfully analyzed by Walter Pater. "Fancies of the strange things which may very well happen, even

Superstition

in broad daylight, to men shut up alone in ships far off on the sea, seem to have occurred to the human mind in all ages with a peculiar readiness, and often have about them, from the story of the stealing of Dionysius downward, the fascination of a certain dreamy grace, which distinguishes them from other kinds of marvellous inventions. This sort of fascination *The Ancient Mariner* brings to its highest degree: it is the delicacy, the dreamy grace, in his presentation of the marvellous, which makes Coleridge's work so remarkable. The too palpable intruders from a spiritual world in almost all ghost literature, in Scott and Shakespeare even, have a kind of crudity or coarseness. Coleridge's power is in the very fineness with which, as by some really ghostly finger, he brings home to our inmost sense his inventions, daring as they are—the skeleton ship, the polar spirit, the inspiriting of the dead corpses of the ship's crew. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* has the plausibility, the perfect adaptation to reason, and the general aspect of life, which belongs to the marvellous, when actually presented as part of a credible experience in our dreams. Doubtless the mere experience of the opium-eater, the habit he must almost necessarily fall into of noting the more elusive phenomena of dreams, had something to do with that; in its essence, however, it is connected with a more purely intellectual circumstance in the development of Coleridge's poetic gift. . . . The modern mind, so minutely self-scrutinizing, if it is to be affected at all by a sense of the supernatural, needs to be more finely touched than was possible in the older romantic presentment of it. . . . It is this finer, more delicately marvellous supernaturalism, fruit of his more delicate psychology, that Coleridge infuses into romantic adventure, itself also then a new or revived thing in English literature; and with a fineness of weird effect in *The Ancient Mariner*, unknown in those older, more simple, romantic legends and ballads. It is a flower of mediæval or later German romance, growing up in the peculiarly compounded atmosphere of modern psychological speculation, and putting forth in it wholly new qualities. The quaint prose commentary, which runs side by side with the verse of *The Ancient Mariner*, illustrates this—a composition of quite a different shade of beauty and merit from that of the verse which it accompanies, connecting this, the chief poem of Coleridge, with his philosophy, and emphasizing therein that psychological interest of which I have spoken, its curious soul-lore."

PART IV

The gloss forms here the only perfect commentary. The first two stanzas interrupt the narrative for the purpose of preventing monotony, and to reveal the effect of this weird story upon the Wedding-Guest. The next stanza relates the Mariner's utter desolation of spirit, and this and the stanzas which follow are usually considered the crucial part of the poem from the philosophical standpoint. The interpretation lies upon the surface. There is no real mystery about it. With unuttered contempt in his heart for the lowly creatures of the deep, he seeks to pray and can not. He despises them that in their debased form they live on, while on the deck lie dead "the many men so beautiful." Through days and nights he feels their curse on his soul, but "in his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth toward the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward." It is a beautiful reflection of Wordsworth's teaching that Nature can redeem us and restore us to our higher selves. Involuntarily he blesses the swimming creatures which he had before despised. This spontaneous sympathy presents itself in marked contrast with the wanton and equally thoughtless cruelty which prompted him to shoot the unoffending Albatross.

*Redeem
himself*

"The selfsame moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea."

Here lies, if anywhere, the allegory.

226-227. **And thou art long**, etc. "For the last two lines of this stanza I am indebted to Mr. Wordsworth" (note of Coleridge). Compare,

"Ribb'd like the sand at mark of sea."

Lord Soullis (Border Minstrelsy).

Note the direct description in this stanza. How does Coleridge generally obtain his effects of human description in the poem?

265-272. After commenting on the exquisite beauty and truth of this passage, the Rev. Stopford Brooke adds: "But Coleridge is uncontent to leave the description of the sky without throwing around it the light of the higher imagination, and it is characteristic of the quaint phantasy which belonged to his nature that

he puts the thoughts which lift the whole scene into the realm of the imagination into the prose gloss at the side—and it is perhaps the loveliest little thought in all his writings."

274. **tracks of shining white.** An allusion to the phosphorescence of the sea occasioned by innumerable animalculæ.

282 f. **O happy living things,** etc. "It is through a sudden welling forth of sympathy with their happiness, and a sudden sense of their beauty, that the spell which binds the afflicted mariner is snapped. That one self-centred in crude egoism should be purified and converted through a new sympathy with suffering and sorrow is a common piece of morality; this purification through sympathy with joy is a piece of finer and higher doctrine."—Dowden, *New Studies in Literature*, page 341. It will be observed that this expiation through spontaneous sympathy consorts with the original offense of wanton cruelty. It has been pointed out that Nature (according to Wordsworth's teaching) had already by her restful beauty prepared the mariner's mind for this access of pure and noble emotion. Its method of manifesting itself by a tender sympathy with animal life is characteristic of romantic poetry. As Brandl (page 97) remarks, "The more the landscape poets of what may be called the century of humanity penetrated into the secrets of earth and air, the more they sympathized with the lower creatures of Nature, and demanded for all and each a fitting lot." What other poet of Coleridge's time and preceding him had shown this new kind of sympathy?

288 f. **I could pray,** etc. The modern humanitarian idea of the efficacy of sympathy is involved in this stanza with the mediæval notion that prayer brought release from the obsession of demons and curses.

PART V

The climax of the story was reached in line 287 of Part VI. What follows in this portion is a result and not a cause. The gruesome element, especially in the stanza, lines 341-344, is wonderfully presented, and the exquisite poetry of lines 367-372 is justly celebrated. The poem now becomes invaded more than ever by mystical allegorical figures.

291. **Oh, sleep!** For other invocations of sleep, compare Shakespeare, *II Henry IV*, III, i; *Macbeth*, II, ii; Sidney, *Son-*

net on Sleep; Daniels's *Sonnet to Sleep* (see Sharp's *Sonnets of this Century*, page lviii); Wordsworth, *Sonnets to Sleep*; etc.

318-326. The Rev. Stopford Brooke, comparing this description of a tropical squall with the peacefulness of lines 367 f, writes as follows: "In both these descriptions, one of the terror, the other of the softness of Nature, a certain charm, of the source of which we are not at once conscious, is given by the introduction into the lonely sea of images borrowed from the land, but which exactly fit the sounds to be described at sea; such as the noise of the brook and the sighing of the sedge. We are brought into closer sympathy with the mariner by this subtle suggestion of his longing for the land and its peace. And we ourselves enjoy the travel of thought, swept to and fro without any shock—on account of the fitness of illustration and thing—from sea to land, from land to sea."

334 f. **The helmsman steered**, etc. See Introduction (pages 61, 64) for the history of this idea of navigating the vessel by the dead seamen.

337. **'gan**. Cf. line 385. The apostrophe is due to the unwarranted supposition that the word is an abbreviated form of "began." It is in direct succession from Middle English, *ginnen*, preterite *gan*, Anglo-Saxon *onginnan*, and is quite common in ballads and old English poetry generally.

345-349. **I fear thee**, etc. This stanza was not in the 1798 edition.

350. **they dropped their arms**. In the text as we now have it "they" refers to spirits, or at least appears to. In the old text the reference was to line 339.

According to tradition, ghosts depart at break of day. Spirits are frequently reported to have disappeared with sounds of music. Contrast this with the angry departure of the seamen's souls in lines 222, 223.

382. **And the ship stood still also**. The ship has now ceased sailing northward impelled by the South Polar spirit who has guided it. Beyond this limit he evidently is powerless to go. The Sun fixes the ship to the Ocean for a minute, when she begins to move

"Backwards and forwards half her length
With a short uneasy motion,"

COLERIDGE

for we must imagine that the Polar spirit does not care to relax his hold until his vengeance is assured. However, the angelic protecting spirits seem to be victorious.

"Then like a pawing horse let go,
She made a sudden bound."

The gloss in lines 377 f. involves curious contradictions. The marginal commentary to lines 103-106 indicates that the ship had then reached the Line on the voyage north. This appears to be contradicted from lines 328, 335, 367 f, 373 f., which imply that the vessel is still sailing northward from the position described in 103 f.

392. **And I fell**, etc. The metre of this line is irregular and scarcely pleasing. The edition of 1798 reads:

"And I fell into a swoond."

399. **By Him who died on cross**. A common ballad oath.

Cf.: "This is a mery mornynge," said Litull John,
'Be hym that dyed on tre'" (cross).

Robin Hood and the Monk, lines 13-14.

407. **honey dew**. For this interesting . . . consult a dictionary. Cf. Coleridge in his *Kubla Khan*:

". . . Close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise."

PART VI

426-429. **Fly, brother, fly! more high, more high!** These lines are not fully clear. We can form only a doubtful surmise as to why the spirits must fly higher, and why they would otherwise be belated. The assumption is that they are bound for some far-off celestial goal, and if from curiosity they tarried longer in the lower regions of the air they would be retarded beyond the due time. It is perhaps more poetically satisfying to permit the existence of some mysteries that can not be explained in this poem.

446-451. Coleridge in English poetry, and Victor Hugo in French poetry, possessed this faculty of evoking the supernatural

67
STRANGE
MISUSE OF
SUBSTITUTION

AN OATH

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dread of the unknown. It is far other and higher in its essence than the crude methods employed to arouse alarm by the "graveyard poets" and prose writers of the eighteenth century.

464 f. "This unexpected gentle conclusion brings our feet back to the common soil, with a bewildered sweetness of relief and soft quiet after the prodigious strain of mental excitement, which is like nothing else we can remember in poetry. . . . Thus we are set down on the soft grass, in a tender bewilderment, out of the clouds."—Mrs. Oliphant.

"How pleasantly, how reassuringly, the whole nightmare story is made to end among the clear, fresh sounds, and lights of the bay where it began."—Walter Pater, *Appreciations*, p. 101.

467. **countree**. Old French *contrée*, Pop. Lat. *contrata*, from L. *contra*, i. e., lying over against, that which is opposite one. Cf. German *Gegend* from *gegen*.—1798 edition, *countrée*. To our modern ears this sounds like a case of wrenched accent, but there is no doubt that originally the last was the stress-bearing syllable in this word, as in many others where we should not so expect it. Among modern poets Rossetti and Mr. Swinburne obtain many curious and often legitimate metrical effects by this unusual placing of the accent; e.g.:

"Nothing is better, I well think
Than love; the hidden well-water
Is not so delicate to drink:
This was well seen of me and her."

Swinburne, *The Leper*.

Naturally, examples might be multiplied from the old ballads.

PART VII

The task of the poet increases in difficulty with this sudden return to normal conditions. He shows consummate skill in effecting the most difficult transition in the poem from the world of mystery and wonder to the world of human reality. "The ship went down like lead," and the Mariner returns once more to the busy haunts of men. Memories of his strange and awful spiritual experience still stir within him, and at uncertain hours the ancient agony returns, until he finds some chosen mortal whom he must chasten by his tale of sin and suffering, and redeem even in a

thoughtless hour of mirth to a consciousness of the seriousness of life. As the tale draws to a close the joyous uproar bursts from the open door :

"The Wedding-Guests are there :
But in the garden-bower the bride
And bride-maids singing are :
And hark the little vesper-bell,
Which biddeth me to prayer !"

This is an evidence that the Ancient Mariner has found redemption at last ; and then follows the poignant stanza in which the whole story is lifted to the spiritual plane, to express, as it has rarely been expressed before, the isolation of a soul in sin :

"O Wedding-Guest ! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea :
So lonely 'twas, that God himself *
Scarce seemed there to be."

We cannot doubt that in these wonderful lines Coleridge has given expression also to his own strivings after spiritual truth.

Though possessed of a fanatic's earnestness, the Mariner still retains his homely sympathies, his simple affections ; and the touch of naturalness in the stanza which follows makes the story of his weird adventures seem more reliable :

"O sweeter than the marriage-feast,
'Tis sweeter far to me,
To walk together to the kirk
With a goodly company."

The noises of the wedding-feast have broken in harmlessly upon the narrative ; we must be deaf to the world for a season in our moods of spiritual effort and attainment ; but the sweet charities of human intercourse again resume their sway :

"To walk together to the kirk,
And all together pray,
While each to his great Father bends,
Old men, and babes, and loving friends,
And youths, and maidens gay."

Despite all the fantastic incident and romantic glamor of his work, we must conclude with Dante Rossetti that "the leading point about Coleridge's work is its human love."

So much for the element of humanity in the poem. The lesson of love and charity to man and beast is even more strongly enforced in the next two stanzas, with too much insistence even, if we trust Coleridge's own statement. "Mrs. Barbauld once told me that she admired *The Ancient Mariner* very much, but that there were two faults in it—it was improbable, and had no moral. As for the probability, I owned that that might admit some question; but as to the want of a moral, I told her that, in my own judgment, the poem had too much; and that the only, or chief fault, if I might say so, was *the obtrusion of the moral sentiment so openly on the reader as a principle or cause of action in a work of such pure imagination*. It ought to have had no more moral than the *Arabian Nights'* tale of the merchant's sitting down to eat dates by the side of a well, and throwing the shells aside, and, lo! a genie starts up, and says he must kill the afore-said merchant, because one of the date shells had, it seems, put out the eye of the genie's son."—*Table Talk*, May 31, 1830.

The italics are not Coleridge's, but serve to emphasize the fact that we must seek for no deeply-hidden moral teaching; the moral is, in fact, so obvious, as Coleridge averred, that he who runs may read. Although we can reconcile many of the events of the narrative with spiritual truths, it is dangerous and not conducive to an enjoyment of the poem to carry the attempt too far. Let us preserve something at least of the charming inconsequence of the *Arabian Nights*, such as the condign punishment and the ruthless slaying of the crew because the Mariner had killed a bird! It does not measurably improve the beauty of the poem to hold with the *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, vol. xiv, that Coleridge desired to establish in *The Ancient Mariner* a system of Christian philosophy, "to present the fall from the innocence of ignorance, from the immediacy of natural faith, and the return, through the medium of sin and doubt, to conscious virtue and belief. . . . 'The ship was cheered'—man commences the voyage of life. 'And now the storm-blast came'—the world, with its buffets, confronts him."

Coleridge never entertained such a poetical heresy as this. His chief concern was to tell a tale of wonder, to break in upon the commonplaceness of our material routine with a voice from the outer world of mystery and dim suggestiveness. And if at times a shaft of spiritual light strikes through the verse, we realize that elsewhere lies the essence of its charm—in the subtle

DON'T
SEEK
THIS

cadence of the diction, the musical fall of the words, the imaginative intensity of the thought, and in that quality of "strangeness added to beauty" which Walter Pater recognized as the distinguishing mark of the romantic temper. The poem is therefore, we repeat, not primarily didactic or even allegoric in character; and, when distinctly moral issues do seem to be involved in the poem, this occurs in pursuance of the poet's purpose to transfer "from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith." It is sufficient for us to know that every poem which subserves the supreme laws of beauty must inevitably bear its tribute to that higher moral law which underlies the beautiful; whereas a poem which should strive to preach morality in defiance of the laws of beauty would miss that nobler aim and thereby fail in its result.

517. **marineros.** So spelled throughout the 1798 edition, and preserved here on account of the rime. Discuss the rimes in this stanza.

529. **The planks look warped.** So written in the 1798 edition, and surely correct. 1817 and all later editions read "looked."

578-590. The motive of these stanzas is evidently derived from the legend of the Wandering Jew. The tradition runs that the latter refused Christ a resting place on his way to the crucifixion, and was therefore doomed to perpetual wandering over the earth, without release by death. He was forced in spite of himself to tell his story, and to preach Christianity even in unwilling ears.

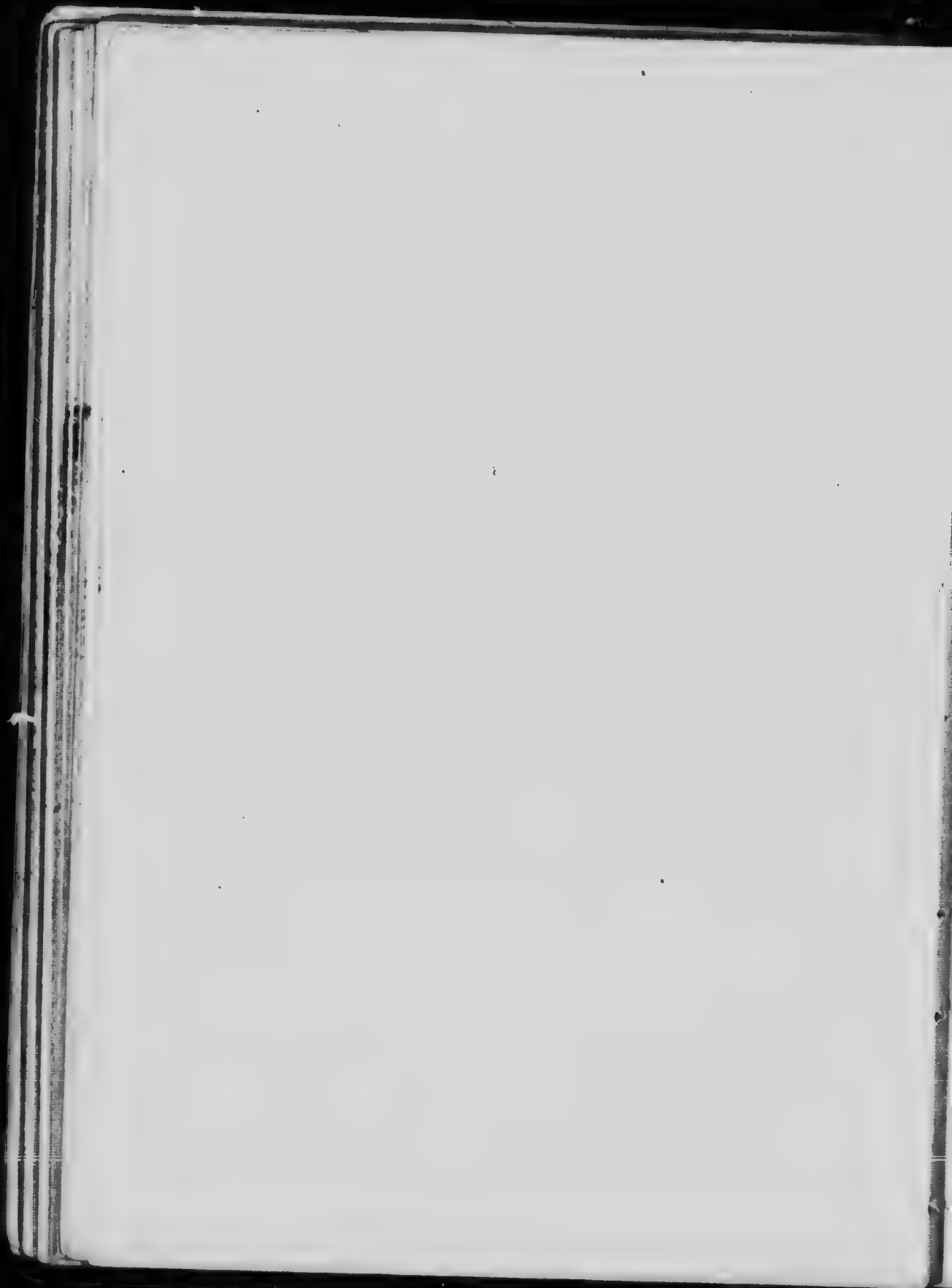
612-617. **He prayeth well,** etc. Reference has already been made to the love of animals as a new source of poetry since the time of Burns and Cowper. "In *The Ancient Mariner* are the two great elements of the folk-tale—love of the marvellous, the supernatural, and love of the lower animals. Wonder is the essence of both and both are of the essence of religion. True to the world's heart is the recognition of something *real* above and beyond the *actual* in life; equally true is the reverent awe with which primitive men regard the migrations and strange instincts of birds and beasts."—E. Charlton Black.

Discuss the general question of a moralistic or allegoric intention in the poem.

The following lines from William Cowper, who wrote only a short time before Coleridge, may be quoted in connection with the humanitarian element in the poem :

" I would not enter on my list of friends
(Though graced with polished manners and fine sense,
Yet wanting sensibility) the man
Who needlessly sets foot upon a worm.
An inadvertent step may crush the snail
That crawls at evening in the public path ;
But he that has humanity, forewarned,
Will tread aside, and let the reptile live.
The creeping vermin, loathsome to the sight,
And charged perhaps with venom, that intrudes
A visitor unwelcome into scenes
Sacred to neatness and repose, the alcove,
The chamber, or refectory, may die.
A necessary act incurs no blame.
The sum is this : if man's convenience, health
Or safety interfere, his rights and claims
Are paramount and must extinguish theirs.
Else they are all—the meanest things that are—
As free to live, and to enjoy that life,
As God was free to form them at the first,
Who in His sovereign wisdom made them all.
Ye, therefore, who love mercy, teach your sons
To love it too."

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH



WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

William Wordsworth was born at Cockermouth, Cumberland, on April 7th, 1770. His father, John Wordsworth, was the agent of Sir J. Lowther, who later became the first Earl of Lonsdale. At the age of eight the boy was sent to school at Hawkshead. The impressions of his boyhood period are related in the autobiographical poem, *The Prelude* (written 1805, published 1850), and from this poetical record we discern how strong the influences of Nature were to shape and develop his imagination. Wordsworth's father died in 1783, leaving the family poorly provided for. The main asset was a considerable claim upon the Earl of Lonsdale, which that individual refused to pay. On his death, in 1802, the successor to the title and estates paid the amount of the claim in full with accumulated interest. In the interval, however, the Wordsworth family remained in very straitened circumstances. Enough money was provided by Wordsworth's guardians to send him to Cambridge University in 1787. He entered St. John's College, and after an undistinguished course graduated without honors in January, 1791. His vacations were spent chiefly in Hawkshead and Wales, but one memorable vacation was marked by a walking excursion with a friend through France and Switzerland, the former country then being on the verge of revolution.

Shortly after leaving the University, in November, 1791, Wordsworth returned to France, remaining there until December of the following year. During this period he was completely won over to the principles of the revolution. The later reaction from these principles constituted the one moral struggle of his life.

In 1793 his first work appeared before the public—two poems, entitled *The Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*. Coleridge, who read these pieces at Cambridge, divined that they announced the emergence of an original poetical genius above the horizon. Readers of the poems to-day, who are wise after the event, could scarcely divine as much. At about this period Wordsworth received a bequest of £900 from Raisley Calvert, which enabled him and his sister Dorothy to take a small cottage at Racedown in Dorsetshire. Here he wrote a number of poems in which he worked off the ferment of his revolutionary ideas. These ideas can scarcely be said to have troubled him much in later years.

An important incident in his life, hardly second in importance to the stimulating companionship of his sister, was his meeting with Coleridge, which occurred probably towards the close of 1795. Coleridge, who was but little younger than Wordsworth, had the more richly equipped, if not the more richly endowed, mind. He was living at Nether Stowey, and in order to benefit by the stimulus which such a friendship offered, the Wordsworths moved to Alfoxden, three miles away from Stowey (July, 1797). It was during a walking expedition to the Quantock Hills in November of that year that the poem of *The Ancient Mariner* was planned. It was intended that the poem should be a joint pro-

duction, but Wordsworth's contribution was confined to the suggestion of a few details merely, and some scattered lines which are indicated in the notes to that poem. Their poetic theories were soon to take definite shape in the publication of the famous *Lyrical Ballads* (September, 1798), to which Coleridge contributed *The Ancient Mariner*, and Wordsworth some characteristic lyrical, reflective, and narrative poems. The excessive simplicity and alleged triviality of some of these poems long continued to give offence to the conservative lovers of poetry. Even to-day we feel that Wordsworth was sometimes the victim of his own theories.

In June of this same year (1798) Wordsworth and his sister accompanied Coleridge to Germany. They soon parted company, the Wordsworths settling at Goslar, while Coleridge, intent upon study, went in search of German metaphysics at Göttingen. Wordsworth did not come into any contract with German life or thought, but sat through the winter by a stove writing poems for a second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*. April, 1799, found the brother and sister again in England. In December they settled down at Dove Cottage, Town End, Grasmere, and never, save for brief intervals, abandoned the Lake Country. In 1802, as has been said, a slight accession of fortune fell to Wordsworth by the settlement of the Lonsdale claim. The share of each of the family was £1,800. On the strength of this wind-fall the poet felt that he might marry, and accordingly brought home Mary Hutchinson as his wife.

The subsequent career of Wordsworth belongs to the history of poetry. Of events in the ordinary sense there are few to record. He successively occu-

pies three houses in the Lake Country after abandoning Dove Cottage. We find him at Allan Bank in 1808, in the Parsonage at Grasmere in 1810, and at Rydal Mount from 1813 to his death in 1850. He makes occasional excursions to Scotland or the Continent, and at long intervals visits London, where Carlyle sees him and records his vivid impressions. For many years Wordsworth enjoys the sinecure of Distributor of Stamps for Westmoreland (£400 a year), and on his resignation of that office in his son's favor, he is placed on the Civil List for a well deserved pension of £300. On Southey's death, in 1843, he is appointed Poet Laureate. He died at Grasmere on April 23rd, 1850.

Wordsworth's principal long poems are: *The Prelude* (1805 published 1850); *The Excursion* (1814); *The White Doe of Rylstone* (1815) and *Peter Bell The Waggoner* (1819). His fame rests principally on his shorter narrative poems, his meditative lyrics, including his two great odes, *To Duty* and *On the Intimations of Immortality*, and on the sonnets, which rank with the finest in the language. The longer poems have many fine passages exhibiting his powers of graphic description, and illustrating his mystical philosophy of nature.

Thomas Carlyle's description of Wordsworth is of interest: "For the rest, he talked well in his way; with veracity, easy brevity, and force, as a wise tradesman would of his tools and workshop, and as no unwise one could. His voice was good, frank, and sonorous, though practically clear, distinct, and forcible, rather than melodious; the tone of him, businesslike, sedately confident; no discourtesy, yet no anxiety about being

courteous. A fine wholesome rusticity, fresh as his mountain breezes, sat well on the stalwart veteran, and on all he said and did. You would have said that he was a usually taciturn man, glad to unlock himself to audience sympathetic and intelligent, when such offered itself. His face bore marks of much, not always peaceful, meditation; the look of it not bland or benevolent so much as close, impregnable, and hard; a man *multa tacere loquive paratus*, in a world where he had experienced no lack of contradictions as he strode along. The eyes were not very brilliant, but they had a quiet clearness; there was enough of brow, and well-shaped; rather too much cheek ('horse face' I have heard satirists say); face of squarish shape, and decidedly longish, as I think the head itself was (its length going horizontal); he was large-boned, lean, but still firm-knit, tall, and strong-looking when he stood, a right good old steel-gray figure, with rustic simplicity and dignity about him, and a vivacious strength looking through him, which might have suited one of those old steel-gray markgrafs whom Henry the Fowler set up towards the 'marches' and do battle with the intrusive heathen in a stalwart and judicious manner.'

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

- Born, April 7, 1770, at Cockermouth, Cumberland.
- Goes to Hawkshead Grammar School, 1778.
- Sent by guardians to St. John's College, Cambridge, October, 1787.
- Foreign tour with Jones, 1790.
- Graduates as B.A. without honors, January, 1791.
- Residence in France, November, 1791, to December, 1792.

Publication of *The Evening Walk*, and *Descriptive Sketches*, 1793.

Legacy from Raisley Calvert of £900, 1794.

Lives at Racedown, Dorsetshire, autumn of 1795 to summer of 1797.

Composes *The Borderers*, a tragedy, 1795-1796.

Close friendship with Coleridge begins in 1797.

Rents a house at Alfoxden, 1797.

Genesis of the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1797.

Lyrical Ballads published September, 1798.

German visit, September, 1798, to April, 1799.

Lives at Dove Cottage, Grasmere, December 21, 1799 to 1806, 1807-1808.

The Lonsdale debt of £8,500 repaid, 1802.

Marries Mary Hutchinson, October, 1802.

Death by drowning of his brother, Captain John Wordsworth, 1805.

Lives at Coleorton, Leicestershire, 1806 to 1807.

Collected Edition of poems, 1807.

Lives at Allan Bank, Easedale, 1808 to 1810.

Lives at the Parsonage, Grasmere, 1810 to 1812.

Loss of two children and removal to Rydal Mount. Grasmere, 1813 to 1850.

Appointed distributor of stamps for Westmoreland (£400 a year), 1813.

The Excursion appears, July, 1814.

Honorary degree of D.C.L. from Oxford, 1839.

Resigns his office as distributor of stamps, 1842.

Receives a pension from Sir R. Peel of £300, 1842.

Appointed Poet Laureate, 1843.

Dies at Grasmere, April 23, 1850.

APPRECIATIONS

Coleridge, with rare insight, summarized Wordsworth's characteristic defects and merits as follows:

"The first characteristic, though only occasional defect, which I appear to myself to find in these poems is the *inconstancy* of the style. Under this name I refer to the sudden and unprepared transitions from lines or sentences of peculiar felicity (at all events striking and original) to a style, not only unimpassioned but undistinguished.

"The second defect I can generalize with tolerable accuracy, if the reader will pardon an uncouth and newly-coined word. There is, I should say, not seldom a *matter-of-factness* in certain poems. This may be divided into, first, a laborious minuteness and fidelity in the representation of objects, and their positions, as they appeared to the poet himself; secondly, the insertion of accidental circumstances, in order to the full explanation of his living characters, their dispositions and actions; which circumstances might be necessary to establish the probability of a statement in real life, when nothing is taken for granted by the hearer; but appear superfluous in poetry, where the reader is willing to believe for his own sake. . . .

"Third; an undue predilection for the *dramatic* form in certain poems, from which one or other of two evils result. Either the thoughts and diction are different from that of the poet, and then there arises an incongruity of style; or they are the same and indistinguishable, where two are represented as talking, while in truth one man only speaks. . . .

"The fourth class of defects is closely connected with the former; but yet are such as arise likewise

from an intensity of feeling disproportionate to such knowledge and value of the objects described, as can be fairly anticipated of men in general, even of the most cultivated classes ; and with which therefore few only, and those few particularly circumstanced, can be supposed to sympathize : in this class, I comprise occasional prolixity, repetition, and an eddying, instead of progression, of thought. . . .

"Fifth and last ; thoughts and images too great for the subject. This is an approximation to what might be called mental bombast, as distinguished from verbal : for, as in the latter there is a disproportion of the expressions to the thoughts, so in this there is a disproportion of thought to the circumstance and occasion. . . .

"To these defects, which are only occasional, I may oppose the following (for the most part correspondent) excellencies :

"First ; an austere purity of language both grammatically and logically ; in short a perfect appropriateness of the words to the meaning. . . .

"The second characteristic excellence of Mr. Wordsworth's works is—a correspondent weight and sanity of the thoughts and sentiments, won not from books, but from the poet's own meditative observations. They are *fresh* and have the dew upon them. . . .

"Third ; the sinewy strength and originality of single lines and paragraphs ; the frequent *curiosa jclicitas* of his diction. . . .

"Fourth : the perfect truth of nature in his images and descriptions as taken immediately from nature, and proving a long and genial intimacy with the very spirit which gives the physiognomic expressions to all the

works of nature. Like a green field reflected in a calm and perfectly transparent lake, the image is distinguished from the reality only by its greater softness and lustre. Like the moisture or the polish on a pebble, genius neither distorts nor false-colors its objects ; but on the contrary, brings out many a vein and many a tint, which escape the eye of common observation, thus raising to the rank of gems what had been often kicked away by the hurrying foot of the traveller on the dusty high-road of custom. . . .

"Fifth; a meditative pathos, a union of deep and subtle thought with sensibility ; a sympathy with man as man ; the sympathy indeed of a contemplator, rather than a fellow-sufferer or co-mate, but of a contemplator, from whose view no difference of rank conceals the sameness of the nature ; no injuries of wind or weather, of toil, or even of ignorance, wholly disguise the human face divine. The superscription and the image of the Creator still remains legible to *him* under the dark lines, with which guilt or calamity had cancelled or cross-barred it. Here the Man and the Poet lose and find themselves in each other, the one as glorified, the latter as substantiated. In this mild and philosophic pathos, Wordsworth appears to me without a compeer. Such as he is ; so he writes.

"Last and pre-eminently, I challenge for this poet the gift of imagination in the highest and strictest sense of the word. In the play of fancy, Wordsworth, to my feelings, is not always graceful, and sometimes recedite. . . . But in imaginative power, he stands nearest of all writers to Shakespeare and Milton ; and yet in a kind perfectly unborrowed and his own."

These are the grounds upon which Coleridge bases the poetic claims of Wordsworth.

Matthew Arnold, in the preface to his well-known collection of Wordsworth's poems, accords to the poet a rank no less exalted. "I firmly believe that the poetical performance of Wordsworth is, after that of Shakespeare and Milton, of which all the world now recognizes the worth, undoubtedly the most considerable in our language from the Elizabethan age to the present time." His essential greatness is to be found in his shorter pieces, despite the frequent intrusion of much that is very inferior. Still it is "by the great body of powerful and significant work which remains to him after every reduction and deduction has been made, that Wordsworth's superiority is proved."

Coleridge had not dwelt sufficiently, perhaps, upon the joyousness which results from Wordsworth's philosophy of human life and external nature. This Matthew Arnold considers to be the prime source of his greatness. "Wordsworth's poetry is great because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties; and because of the extraordinary power with which, in case after case, he shows us this joy, and renders it so as to make us share it." Goethe's poetry, as Wordsworth once said, is not inevitable enough, is too consciously moulded by the supreme will of the artist. "But Wordsworth's poetry," writes Arnold, "when he is at his best, is inevitable, as inevitable as Nature herself. It might seem that Nature not only gave him the matter for his poem, but wrote his poem for him." The set poetic style of *The Excursion* is a failure, but there is something unique and unmatched in the simple grace of his narrative poems and lyrics. "Nature herself seems, I say, to take the pen out of his hand, and to

write for him with her own bare, sheer, penetrating power. This arises from two causes: from the profound sincereness with which Wordsworth feels his subject, and also from the profoundly sincere and natural character of his subject itself. He can and will treat such a subject with nothing but the most plain, first hand, almost austere naturalness. His expression may often be called bald, as, for instance, in the poem of *Resolution and Independence*; but it is bald as the bare mountain tops are bald, with a baldness which is full of grandeur. . . . Wherever we meet with the successful balance, in Wordsworth, of profound truth of subject with profound truth of execution, he is unique."

Professor Dowden has also laid stress upon the harmonious balance of Wordsworth's nature, his different faculties seeming to interpenetrate one another, and yield mutual support. He has likewise called attention to the austere naturalism of which Arnold speaks. "Wordsworth was a great naturalist in literature, but he was also a great idealist; and between the naturalist and the idealist in Wordsworth no opposition existed: each worked with the other, each served the other. While Scott, by allying romance with reality, saved romantic fiction from the extravagances and follies into which it had fallen, Wordsworth's special work was to open a higher way for naturalism in art by its union with ideal truth."

Criticism has long since ceased to ridicule his *Betty Foy*, and his *Harry Gill*, whose "teeth, they chatter, chatter still." Such malicious sport proved only too easy for Wordsworth's contemporaries, and still the essential value of his poetry was unimpaired.

The range of poetry is indeed inexhaustible, and even the greatest poets must suffer some subtraction from universal pre-eminence. Therefore we may frankly admit the deficiencies of Wordsworth,—that he was lacking in dramatic force and in the power of characterization; that he was singularly deficient in humor, and therefore in the saving grace of self-criticism in the capacity to see himself occasionally in a ridiculous light; that he has little of the romantic glamor and none of the narrative energy of Scott; that Shelley's lyrical flights leave him plodding along the dusty highway; and that Byron's preternatural force makes his passion seen by contrast pale and ineffectual. All this and more may freely be granted, and yet for his influence upon English thought, and especially upon the poetic thought of his country, he must be named after Shakespeare and Milton. The intellectual value of his work will endure; for leaving aside much valuable doctrine, which from didactic excess fails as poetry, he has brought into the world a new philosophy of Nature, and has emphasized in a manner distinctively his own the dignity of simple manhood. — *Pelham Edgar*.

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M I C H A E L

A PASTORAL POEM

If from the public way you turn your steps
Up the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,
You will suppose that with an upright path
Your feet must struggle; in such bold ascent
The pastoral mountains front you, face to face.

2. **Green-head Ghyll.** Near Dove Cottage, Wordsworth's home at Grasmere.

Ghyll. A short, steep, and narrow valley with a stream running through it.

5. **The pastoral mountains.** In Professor Knight's *Life of Wordsworth* are found fragments which the poet intended for *Michael* and which were recovered from Dorothy Wordsworth's manuscript book. Among these are the following lines, which as Professor Dowden suggests, are given as Wordsworth's answer to the question, "What feeling for external nature had such a man as Michael?" The lines, which correspond to lines 62-77 of the poem, are as follows:

"No doubt if you in terms direct had asked
Whether he loved the mountains, true it is
That with blunt repetition of your words
He might have stared at you, and said that they
Were frightful to behold, but had you then
Discoursed with him
Of his own business and the goings on
Of earth and sky, then truly had you seen
That in his thoughts there were obscurities,
Wonder and admiration, things that wrought
Not less than a religion of his heart."

But, courage ! for around that boisterous brook
 The mountains have all opened out themselves,
 And made a hidden valley of their own.
 No habitation can be seen ; but they
 Who journey thither find themselves alone 10
 With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites
 That overhead are sailing in the sky.
 It is in truth an utter solitude ;
 Nor should I have made mention of this Dell
 But for one object which you might pass by, 15
 Might see and notice not. Beside the brook
 Appears a straggling heap of unhewn stones,
 And to that simple object appertains
 A story,—unenriched with strange events,
 Yet not unfit, I deem, for the fireside, 20
 Or for the summer shade. It was the first
 Of those domestic tales that spake to me
 Of Shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men
 Whom I already loved :—not verily
 For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills 25
 Where was their occupation and abode.
 And hence this Tale, while I was yet a Boy
 Careless of books, yet having felt the power
 Of Nature, by the gentle agency
 Of natural objects, led me on to feel 30
 For passions that were not my own, and think
 (At random and imperfectly indeed)
 On man, the heart of man, and human life. —
 Therefore, although it be a history
 Homely and rude, I will relate the same 35

17. In Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal for October 11, 1800, we read : " After dinner we walked up Greenhead Gill in search of a sheepfold. . . . The sheepfold is falling away. It is built in the form of a heart unequally divided.

For the delight of a few natural hearts ;
 And, with yet fonder feeling, for the sake
 Of youthful Poets, who among these hills
 Will be my second self when I am gone.

Upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale 40
 There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name ;
 An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.
 His bodily frame had been from youth to age
 Of an unusual strength : his mind was keen,
 Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs, 45
 And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
 And watchful more than ordinary men.
 Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,
 Of blasts of every tone ; and oftentimes,
 When others heeded not, he heard the South 50
 Make subterraneous music, like the noise
 Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.
 The Shepherd, at such warning, of his flock
 Bethought him, and he to himself would say,
 "The winds are now devising work for me !" 55
 And, truly, at all times, the storm, that drives

48. **the meaning of all winds.** This is not a figurative statement. Michael knows by experience whether the sound and direction of the wind forebode storm or fair weather,—precisely the practical kind of knowledge which a herdsman should possess.

51. **subterraneous.** The meaning of this word has given rise to discussion. "Subterraneous" cannot here be literally employed, unless it refer to the sound of the wind in hollow places, and beneath overhanging crags.

51-52. **like the noise, etc.** Is there a special appropriateness in the use of a Scottish simile? What is the general character of the similes throughout the poem?

56-77. Wordsworth never attributes to Michael the subtler and more philosophical sensations which he himself derived from nature. Such poems as *The Prelude* or *The Excursion* contain many elevated passages on the influence of nature, which would have been exceedingly inappropriate here.

The traveller to a shelter, summoned him
 Up to the mountains : he had been alone
 Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
 That came to him, and left him, on the heights. 60
 So lived he till his eightieth year was past.
 And grossly that man errs, who should suppose
 That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks,
 Were things indifferent to the Shepherd's thoughts. 65
 Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed
 The common air ; hills, which with vigorous step
 He had so often climbed ; which had impressed
 So many incidents upon his mind
 Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear ;
 Which, like a book, preserved the memory 70
 Of the dumb animals whom he had saved,
 Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts
 The certainty of honorable gain ;
 Those fields, those hills—what could they less?—had
 laid
 Strong hold on his affections, were to him 75
 A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
 The pleasure which there is in life itself.

His days had not been passed in singleness.
 His Helpmate was a comely matron, old—
 Though younger than himself full twenty years. 80
 She was a woman of a stirring life,
 Whose heart was in her house: two wheels she had
 Of antique form ; this large, for spinning wool ;
 That small, for flax ; and if one wheel had rest,
 It was because the other was at work. 85
 The Pair had but one inmate in their house,
 An only Child, who had been born to them
 When Michael, telling o'er his years, began

To deem that he was old,—in shepherd's phrase,
 With one foot in the grave. This only Son,
 With two brave sheep-dogs tried in many a storm,
 The one of an inestimable worth,
 Made all their household. I may truly say
 That they were as a proverb in the vale
 For endless industry. When day was gone,
 And from their occupations out of doors
 The Son and Father were come home, even then
 Their labor did not cease ; unless when all
 Turned to the cleanly supper board, and there,
 Each with a mess of pottage and skimmed milk,
 Sat round the basket piled with oaten cakes,
 And their plain home-made cheese. Yet when the
 meal

90

95

100

Was ended, Luke (for so the Son was named)
 And his old Father both betook themselves
 To such convenient work as might employ
 Their hands by the fireside ; perhaps to card
 Wool for the Housewife's spindle, or repair
 Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,
 Or other implement of house or field.

105

Down from the ceiling, by the chimney's edge,
 That in our ancient uncouth country style
 With huge and black projection overbrowed
 Large space beneath, as duly as the light
 Of day grew dim the Housewife hung a lamp ;
 An aged utensil, which had performed
 Service beyond all others of its kind.
 Early at evening did it burn,—and late,
 Surviving comrade of uncounted hours,
 Which, going by from year to year, had found,

110

115

And left the couple neither gay perhaps 120
 Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,
 Living a life of eager industry.
 And now, when Luke had reached his eighteenth year,
 There by the light of this old lamp they sate,
 Father and Son, while far into the night 125
 The Housewife plied her own peculiar work,
 Making the cottage through the silent hours
 Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.
 This light was famous in its neighborhood,
 And was a public symbol of the life 130
 That thrifty Pair had lived. For, as it chanced,
 Their cottage on a plot of rising ground
 Stood single, with large prospect, north and south,
 High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise,
 And westward to the village near the lake; 135
 And from this constant light, so regular,
 And so far seen, the House itself, by all
 Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,
 Both old and young, was named the EVENING STAR.

 Thus living on through such a length of years, 140
 The Shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs
 Have loved his Helpmate; but to Michael's heart

121. **Nor cheerful.** The epithet seems not well chosen in view of the fact that all the circumstances of their life breathe a spirit of quiet cheerfulness. Surely the light (129-131) was a symbol of cheer.

126. **peculiar work.** Bring out the force of the epithet.

134. **Easedale.** Near Grasmere. **Dunmail-Raise.** The pass leading from Grasmere to Keswick. **Raise.** A provincial word meaning "an ascent."

139. **the Evening Star.** This name was actually given to a neighboring house.

This son of his old age was yet more dear—
 Less from instinctive tenderness, the same
 Fond spirit that blindly works in the blood of all— 143
 Than that a child, more than all other gifts
 That earth can offer to declining man,
 Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,
 And stirrings of inquietude, when they
 By tendency of nature needs must fail. 150
 Exceeding was the love he bare to him,
 His heart and his heart's joy! For oftentimes
 Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,
 Had done him female service, not alone
 For pastime and delight, as is the use 155
 Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced
 To acts of tenderness; and he had rocked
 His cradle, as with a woman's gentle hand.

And in a later time, ere yet the Boy
 Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love, 160
 Albeit of a stern, unbending mind,
 To have the Young-one in his sight, when he
 Wrought in the field, or on his shepherd's stool
 Sat with a fettered sheep before him stretched
 Under the large old oak, that near his door 165
 Stood single, and, from matchless depth of shade,
 Chosen for the shearer's covert from the sun,
 Thence in our rustic dialect was called

143-152. The love of Michael for Luke is inwrought with his love for his home and for the land which surrounds it. These he desires at his death to hand down unencumbered to his son. "I have attempted," Wordsworth wrote to Poole, "to give a picture of a man of strong mind and lively sensibility, agitated by two of the most powerful affections of the human heart—the parental affection and the love of property, *landed* property, including the feelings of inheritance, home and personal and family independence."

145. Scan this line.

The CLIPPING TREE, a name which yet it bears,
 There, while they two were sitting in the shade, 170
 With others round them, earnest all and blithe,
 Would Michael exercise his heart with looks
 Of fond correction and reproof bestowed
 Upon the Child, if he disturbed the sheep
 By catching at their legs, or with his shouts 175
 Scared them while they lay still beneath the shears.

And when by Heaven's good grace the Boy grew up
 A healthy Lad, and carried in his cheek
 Two steady roses that were five years old;
 Then Michael from a winter coppice cut 180
 With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped
 With iron, making it throughout in all
 Due requisites a perfect shepherd's staff,
 And gave it to the Boy; wherewith equipped
 He as a watchman oftentimes was placed 185
 At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock;
 And, to his office prematurely called,
 There stood the urchin, as you will divine,
 Something between a hindrance and a help;
 And for this cause not always, I believe, 190
 Receiving from his Father hire of praise;
 Though naught was left undone which staff, or voice,
 Or looks, or threatening gestures, could perform.

But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand
 Against the mountain blasts; and to the heights, 195
 Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,
 He with his Father daily went, and they
 Were as companions, why should I relate

169. **The Clipping Tree.** Clipping is the word used in the North of England for shearing. (Wordsworth's note, 1800).

182. Notice the entire absence of pause at the end of the line. Point out other instances of run-on lines' (*enjambement*).

That objects which the Shepherd loved before
 Were dearer now? that from the Boy there came 200
 Feelings and emanations,—things which were
 Light to the sun and music to the wind;
 And that the old Man's heart seemed born again?

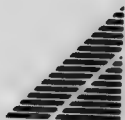
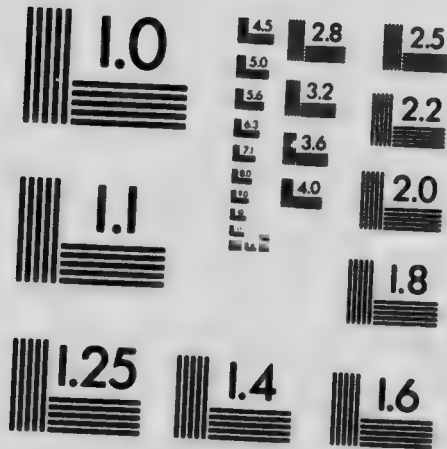
Thus in his Father's sight the boy grew up:
 And now, when he had reached his eighteenth year, 205
 He was his comfort and his daily hope.

While in this sort the simple household lived
 From day to day, to Michael's ear there came
 Distressful tidings. Long before the time
 Of which I speak, the Shepherd had been bound 210
 In surety for his brother's son, a man
 Of an industrious life, and ample means;
 But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly
 Had pressed upon him; and old Michael now
 Was summoned to discharge the forfeiture, 215
 A grievous penalty, but little less
 Than half his substance. This unlooked-for claim,
 At the first hearing, for a moment took
 More hope out of his life than he supposed
 That any old man ever could have lost. 220
 As soon as he had armed himself with strength
 To look his trouble in the face, it seemed
 The Shepherd's sole resource to sell at once
 A portion of his patrimonial fields.
 Such was his first resolve; he thought again, 225
 And his heart failed him. "Isabel," said he,
 Two evenings after he had heard the news,
 "I have been toiling more than seventy years,
 And in the open sunshine of God's love
 Have we all lived; yet if these fields of ours 230
 Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think



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That I could not lie quiet in my grave.
 Our lot is a hard lot ; the sun himself
 Has scarcely been more diligent than I ;
 And I have lived to be a fool at last 235
 To my own family. An evil man
 That was, and made an evil choice, if he
 Were false to us ; and if he were not false,
 There are ten thousand to whom loss like this
 Had been no sorrow. I forgive him ;—but 240
 'Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus.

“ When I began, my purpose was to speak
 Of remedies and of a cheerful hope.
 Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel ; the land
 Shall not go from us, and it shall be free ; 245
 He shall possess it, free as is the wind
 That passes over it. We have, thou know'st,
 Another kinsman ; he will be our friend
 In this distress. He is a prosperous man,
 Thriving in trade ; and Luke to him shall go, 250
 And with his kinsman's help and his own thrift
 He quickly will repair this loss, and then
 He may return to us. If here he stay,
 What can be done ? Where every one is poor,
 What can be gained ? ”

At this the old Man paused, 255
 And Isabel sat silent, for her mind
 Was busy, looking back into past times.
 There's Richard Bateman, thought she to herself,
 He was a parish-boy,—at the church-door
 They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence, 260
 And half-pennies, wherewith the neighbors bought
 A basket, which they filled with pedlar's wares ;

259. parish-boy. Depending on charity.

And, with his basket on his arm, the lad
 Went up to London, found a master there,
 Who, out of many, chose the trusty boy 265
 To go and overlook his merchandise
 Beyond the seas ; where he grew wondrous rich,
 And left estates and moneys to the poor,
 And at his birthplace built a chapel, floored
 With marble, which he sent from foreign lands. 270
 These thoughts, and many others of like sort,
 Passed quickly through the mind of Isabel
 And her face brightened. The old Man was glad,
 And thus resumed: " Well, Isabel, this scheme,
 These two days, has been meat and drink to me. 275
 Far more than we have lost is left us yet.
 —We have enough—I wish indeed that I
 Were younger;—but this hope is a good hope.
 Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best
 Buy for him more, and let us send him forth 280
 To-morrow, or the next day, or to-night:
 —If he *could* go, the Boy should go to-night."

Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth
 With a light heart. The Housewife for five days
 Was restless morn and night, and all day long 285
 Wrought on with her best fingers to prepare
 Things needful for the journey of her son.
 But Isabel was glad when Sunday came

268-270. Wordsworth added the following note on these lines :
 "The story alluded to here is well known in the country. The chapel is called Ing's Chapel ; and is on the right hand side of the road leading from Kendal to Ambleside."

283. **and to the fields went forth.** Observe the inconsistency. The conversation took place in the evening. See l. 227.

284 f. **With a light heart.** Michael's growing misgivings are subtly represented in the following lines, and the renewal of his hopes.

To stop her in her work; for, when she lay
By Michael's side, she through the last two nights 295
Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep:
And when they rose at morning she could see
That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon
She said to Luke, while they two by themselves
Were sitting at the door, "Thou must not go: 295
We have no other Child but thee to lose,
None to remember—do not go away,
For if thou leave thy Father he will die."
The Youth made answer with a jocund voice;
And Isabel, when she had told her fears, 300
Recovered heart. That evening her best fare
Did she bring forth, and all together sat
Like happy people round a Christmas fire.

With daylight Isabel resumed her work;
And all the ensuing week the house appeared 305
As cheerful as a grove in Spring: at length
The expected letter from their kinsman came,
With kind assurances that he would do
His utmost for the welfare of the Boy;
To which requests were added, that forth with 310
He might be sent to him. Ten times or more
The letter was read over; Isabel
Went forth to show it to the neighbors round;
Nor was there at that time on English land
A prouder heart than Luke's. When Isabel 315
Had to her house returned, the old Man said,
"He shall depart to-morrow." To this word
The Housewife answered, talking much of things
Which, if at such short notice he should go,
Would surely be forgotten. But at length 320
She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.

Near the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,
In that deep valley, Michael had designed
To build a Sheep-fold; and, before he heard
The tidings of his melancholy loss, 325
For this same purpose he had gathered up
A heap of stones, which by the streamlet's edge
Lay thrown together, ready for the work.
With Luke that evening thitherward he walked;
And soon as they had reached the place he stopped, 330
And thus the old man spake to him:—"My Son,
To-morrow thou wilt leave me; with full heart
I look upon thee, for thou art the same
That wert a promise to me ere thy birth
And all thy life hast been my daily joy. 335
I will relate to thee some little part
Of our two histories; 'twill do thee good
When thou art from me, even if I should touch
On things thou canst not know of.—After thou
First cam'st into the world—as oft befalls 340
To newborn infants—thou didst sleep away
Two days, and blessings from thy Father's tongue
Then fell upon thee. Day by day passed on,
And still I loved thee with increasing love.
Never to living ear came sweeter sounds 345
Than when I heard thee by our own fireside
First uttering, without words, a natural tune;
While thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy
Sing at thy Mother's breast. Month followed month,
And in the open fields my life was passed, 350
And on the mountains; else I think that thou
Hadst been brought up upon thy Father's knees.
But we were playmates, Luke; among these hills,
As well thou knowest, in us the old and young
Have played together, nor with me didst thou 355

Lack any pleasure which a boy can ! w."
 Luke had a manly heart; but at these words
 He sobbed aloud. The old Man grasped his hand,
 And said, "Nay, do not take it so—I see
 That these are things of which I need not speak. 360
 —Even to the utmost I have been to thee
 A kind and a good Father; and herein
 I but repay a gift which I myself
 Received at others' hands; for, though now old
 Beyond the common life of man, I still 365
 Remember them who loved me in my youth.
 Both of them sleep together; here they lived,
 As all their Forefathers had done; and, when
 At length their time was come, they were not loath
 To give their bodies to the family mould. 370
 I wished that thou should'st live the life they lived;
 But 'tis a long time to look back, my Son,
 And see so little gain from threescore years.
 These fields were burthened when they came to me;
 Till I was forty years of age, not more 375
 Than half of my inheritance was mine.
 I toiled and toiled; God blessed me in my work,
 And till the three weeks past the land was free.
 —It looks as if it never could endure
 Another Master. Heaven forgive me, Luke, 380
 If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good
 That thou shouldst go."

At this the old Man paused;
 Then, pointing to the stones near which they stood,
 Thus, after a short silence, he resumed:

367-368. These lines forcibly show how tenaciously Michael's feelings were rooted in the soil of his home. Hence the extreme pathos of the situation.

"This was a work for us; and now, my Son,
 It is a work for me. But, lay one stone,—
 Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands.
 Nay, Boy, be of good hope; we both may live
 To see a better day. At eighty-four
 I still am strong and hale;—do thou thy part;
 I will do mine.—I will begin again
 With many tasks that were resigned to thee;
 Up to the heights, and in among the storms,
 Will I without thee go again, and do
 All works which I was wont to do alone,
 Before I knew thy face. Heaven bless thee, Boy!
 Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast
 With many hopes; it should be so—yes, yes,—
 I knew that thou couldst never have a wish
 To leave me, Luke; thou hast been bound to me
 Only by links of love: when thou art gone
 What will be left to us!—But I forget
 My purposes. Lay now the corner-stone,
 As I requested; and hereafter, Luke,
 When thou art gone away, should evil men
 Be thy companions, think of me, my Son,
 And of this moment; hither turn thy thoughts,
 And God will strengthen thee: amid all fear
 And all temptation, Luke, I pray that thou
 May'st bear in mind the life thy Fathers lived,
 Who, being innocent did for that cause
 Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well—
 When thou return'st, thou in this place wilt see
 A work which is not here: a covenant
 'Twill be between us; but, whatever fate

388. Observe the dramatic force of this line.

393-396. What unconscious poetry there is in the old man's words!

Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last,
And bear thy memory with me to the grave."

The Shepherd ended here; and Luke stooped down,
And, as his Father had requested, laid
The first stone of the Sheep-fold. At the sight 420
The old Man's grief broke from him; to his heart
He pressed his Son, he kissed him and wept;
And to the house together they returned.
—Hushed was that House in peace, or seeming peace,
Ere the night fell:—with morrow's dawn the Boy 425
Began his journey, and when he had reached
The public way, he put on a bold face;
And all the neighbors, as he passed their doors,
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers,
That followed him till he was out of sight. 430

A good report did from their Kinsman come,
Of Luke and his well doing: and the Boy
Wrote loving letters, full of wondrous news,
Which, as the Housewife phrased it, were throughout
"The prettiest letters that were ever seen." 435
Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts.
So, many months passed on; and once again
The Shepherd went about his daily work
With confident and cheerful thoughts; and now
Sometimes when he could find a leisure hour 440
He to that valley took his way, and there
Wrought at the Sheep-fold. Meantime Luke began
To slacken in his duty; and, at length,
He in the dissolute city gave himself
To evil courses: ignominy and shame 445

420. Scan this line.

445. Scan this line.

Fell on him, so that he was driven at last
To seek a hiding place beyond the seas.

There is a comfort in the strength of love;
'Twill make a thing endurable, which else
Would overset the brain, or break the heart: 450
I have conversed with more than one who well
Remember the old Man, and what he was
Years after he had heard this heavy news.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks 455
He went, and still looked up to sun and cloud,
And listened to the wind; and, as before,
Performed all kinds of labor for his sheep,
And for the land, his small inheritance.
And to that hollow dell from time to time 460
Did he repair, to build the Fold of which
His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet
The pity which was then in every heart
For the old Man—and 'tis believed by all
That many and many a day he thither went, 465
And never lifted up a single stone.

There by the Sheep-fold, sometimes was he seen
Sitting alone, or with his faithful Dog,
Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.
The length of full seven years, from time to time 470

466. Matthew Arnold commenting on this line says: "The right sort of verse to choose from Wordsworth, if we are to seize his true and most characteristic form of expression, is a line like this from Michael: 'And never lifted up a single stone.' There is nothing subtle in it, no heightening, no study of poetic style strictly so called, at all; yet it is an expression of the highest and most truly expressive kind."

467 f. Note the noble simplicity and pathos of these closing lines. There is a reserved force of pent-up pathos here, which without effort reaches the height of dramatic effectiveness.

He at the building of this Sheep-fold wrought,
And left the work unfinished when he died.

Three years, or little more, did Isabel
Survive her Husband; at her death the estate
Was sold, and went into a stranger's hand.

The Cottage which was named the EVENING STAR
Is gone,—the ploughshare has been through the
ground

On which it stood; great changes have been wrought
In all the neighborhood:—yet the oak is left,
That grew beside their door; and the remains
Of the unfinished Sheep-fold may be seen
Beside the boisterous brook of Green-head Ghyll.

471

480

NOTES ON

MICHAEL.

The poem was composed in 1800, and published in the second volume of the *Lyrical Ballads* in the same year. "Written at the Town-end, Grasmere, about the same time as *The Brothers*. The Sheep-fold, on which so much of the poem turns, remains, or rather the ruins of it. The character and circumstances of Luke were taken from a family to whom had belonged, many years before, the house we lived in at Town-end, along with some fields and woodlands on the eastern shore of Grasmere. The name of the Evening Star was not in fact given to this house, but to another on the same side of the valley, more to the north."

In a letter to Charles James Fox the poet says: "In the two poems, *The Brothers* and *Michael*, I have attempted to draw a picture of the domestic affections, as I know they exist among a class of men who are now almost confined to the north of England. They are small independent *proprietors* of land, here called 'statesmen' [i.e., estates-men], men of respectable education, who daily labor on their little properties. . . Their little tract of land serves as a kind of rallying point for their domestic feelings, as a tablet upon which they are written, which makes them objects of memory in a thousand instances, when they would otherwise be forgotten. The two poems that I have mentioned were written to show that men who do not wear fine clothes can feel deeply."

Edward Fulton in a *A Selection of the Shorter Poems of Wordsworth* (Macmillan) says: "The reason Wordsworth succeeds best in describing the type of character portrayed in *Michael* and *The Brothers* is, of course, chiefly because he knew that type best; but the fact that it was the type for which he himself might have stood as the representative was not without

its effect upon him. His ideal man is but a variation of himself. As Dean Church puts it: 'The ideal man with Wordsworth is the hard-headed, frugal, unambitious dalesman of his own hills, with his strong affections, his simple tastes, and his quiet and beautiful home; and this dalesman, built up by communion with nature and by meditation into the poet-philosopher, with his serious faith and his never-failing spring of enjoyment, is himself.' Types of character wholly alien to his own have little attraction for him. He is content to look into the depths of his own heart and to represent what he sees there. His field of vision, therefore, is a very limited one: it takes in only a few types. It is *man*, in fact, rather than *men*, that interests him."

The poem *Michael* is well adapted to show Wordsworth's powers of realism. He describes the poem as "a pastoral," which at once induces a comparison, greatly to Wordsworth's advantage, with the pseudo-pastorals of the age of Pope. There the shepherds and shepherdesses were scarcely the pale shadows of reality, while Wordsworth's poem never swerves from the line of truth. "The poet," as Sir Henry Taylor says with reference to *Michael*, "writes in his confidence to impart interest to the realities of life, deriving both the confidence and the power from the deep interest which he feels in them. It is an attribute of unusual susceptibility of imagination to need no extraordinary provocatives; and when this is combined with intensity of observation and peculiarity of language, it is the high privilege of the poet so endowed to rest upon the common realities of life and to dispense with its anomalies." The student should therefore be careful to observe (1) the truth of description, and the appropriateness of the description to the characters; (2) the strong and accurate delineation of the characters themselves. Not only is this to be noted in the passages where the poet has taken pains openly to portray their various characteristics, but there are many passages, or single lines perhaps, which serve more subtly to delineate them. What proud reserve, what sorrow painfully restrained, the following line, for example, contains: "Two evenings after he had heard the news."

GEORGE GORDON LORD BYRON

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

George Gordon Byron was born in Hollis Street, London, on January 22nd, 1788. His father, popularly known as 'mad Jack Byron,' had led a very dissipated life, and when he came to the end of his resources, hastened to repair his broken fortunes by a marriage with Catharine Gordon, an heiress of Aberdeen. But her fortune proved less than he had expected and was soon almost gone. After a stormy married life of five years the couple separated, Captain Byron dying in France in 1791.

"Mrs. Byron was thus left with £150 a year and a three year old boy. Shortly after the poet's birth the parents had moved to Aberdeen, and there, among her friends, Mrs. Byron might have managed very well. But she was irritable, quick-tempered, and very unreasonable in the education of her child. He, on his part, though he had fits of affection for her, felt little filial respect. She spent half her time in caressing him and half in abusing him. In her more violent tempers she pursued him with poker and tongs and called him a 'lame brat.' In answer he developed his 'silent rages,' which kept the awestruck mother at a distance. Once he seized a knife and threatened to commit suicide. Another time the domestic feud was so great that Mrs. Byron hastened to the apothecary and told him not to

sell her son any poison—only to find that the son had given like instructions in regard to her."

After spending a short time at Mr. Bower's school, Byron entered in 1794 the Aberdeen Grammar School. He was very shy, but exceedingly difficult to manage. In 1798, by the death of his great-uncle he inherited the family estate of Newstead and also the title, being thenceforth known as Lord Byron. "So sensitive was he that when 'Dominus' was first read out he burst into tears."

During the whole course of his life Byron was constantly falling in love, his affairs, for the time being at least, being desperately earnest. At the age of nine he fell in love with Mary Duff. Three years later Margaret Parker was the object of his affection. She was succeeded in 1803 by Mary Anne Chaworth, who resolutely refused to listen to the pleadings of her ardent suitor. All of these affairs left an indelible impression on the mind of the boy, and influenced in no small degree his future career.

In 1799 Mrs. Byron removed with her son to London, in order that he might have the advantage of skilful medical attention for his lame foot, and that he might be placed in a good school. Dr. Glennie's Academy was chosen, and here the boy was surrounded by influences that might have proved beneficial, had not the discipline exerted by the school been almost completely undone by the foolish and hysterical actions of Mrs. Byron. To remove him from her influence he was sent to Harrow in 1801. There, although his lameness prevented him from taking a very active part in the life of the school, he was not undistinguished on the playground, especially in riding and swimming.

In 1805 Byron entered Trinity College, Cambridge. His academic life was by no means distinguished, being marked chiefly by rebellion against constituted authority and by the wildest extravagances. "The worst side of Byron's early life is seen at Cambridge—his pride, conceit, and vulgar ostentation. It must be said in his favor, however, that he was frolicsome rather than vicious. Underneath, moreover, there was plenty of evidence of sincerity—in his opposition to bigotry and cant and in his choice of friends. His best friend at college, as indeed his staunchest defender after his death, was John Cam Hobhouse (Lord Broughton)." In the fall of 1808 he received his Master of Arts degree from Cambridge. In the next year he took his seat in the House of Lords.

While still at Cambridge Byron had printed for private circulation some of his juvenile verse, but soon afterwards burned the edition. In March, 1807, however, he brought out for public distribution his *Hours of Idleness*. The poems in the volume were sufficiently weak, but they did not merit the severe castigation given them by the *Edinburgh Review*, which, in its usual style, handled its victim without mercy. Byron was stung to the quick, but his fighting spirit was aroused. Withdrawing for a time from the university he occupied his time in preparing for the press his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, a merciless satire on the leading poets and reviewers of his day. The book was published in 1809 and answered fully the poet's expectations. It proved that he, too, could sting. For the future Byron was respected, feared if not loved.

In July, 1809, Byron, with his friend Hobhouse, sailed for Lisbon. For the next two years he remained

abroad, visiting Spain, Italy, and Greece, and occupying his leisure time in the writing of the first two cantos of *Childe Harold*. The book was published on his return to London, and, as he said himself, he "awoke and found himself famous." London went mad over the young poet, who was young, talented, and a Lord, and who moreover, had a reputation for "wickedness". Everything that could possibly be done to spoil him was done; the marvel is that he kept his head at all. Poem after poem flowed from his pen — *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *The Corsair*, *Lara*, *Parisina*, and *The Siege of Corinth*. Scott was completely eclipsed.

Byron now for the first time, in the full tide of his poetical and social success, met Miss Anne Isabella Milbanke, with whom he fell in love with his usual violence. At first she refused him, but at length after two years yielded to his persistence. They were married on January 2nd, 1815. For a time they lived happily together, but shortly after the birth of their daughter they separated. Much has been written in connection with this most unhappy controversy. Byron has been blamed very severely for his part in the transaction, and certainly he was the chief sufferer. It is idle to discuss the question and no good purpose is served thereby. The main point to be noted is that the outcry that arose over the separation drove Byron from England. He was now as much detested as he had formerly been loved, as much execrated as he had formerly been praised. In utter disgust he quitted England on April 25th, 1816, never to see his native land again. "I felt," he said, "that if what was whispered and muttered and murmured was true, I was unfit for England; if false England was unfit for me."

Byron proceeded at once by way of the Rhine to Geneva, where Shelley and his family joined him. The influence of Shelley was for Byron's good, and while at Geneva he did some of his best work—*Prometheus*, *The Prisoner of Chillon*, and the third canto of *Childe Harold*. In the fall of the same year he passed over into Italy, accompanied by Hobhouse. In that country he passed practically the rest of his life, plunging into the wildest of dissipation, but at no time allowing his writing to suffer. It is best to pass over these years in silence. During six years he produced an enormous amount of poetry—*Manfred*, *The Lament of Tasso*, *Beppo*, *Marino Faliero*, *Sardanapalus*, *The Two Foscari*, *Cain*, and his greatest work *Don Juan*. In these years he received from his publisher £12,580 for his writings. He was now entirely freed from money troubles—Newstead had been sold for a large sum and he had received a large legacy on the death of Lady Noel.

In 1823 Byron became interested in the struggle of the Greeks to free themselves from the domination of the Turks. Hinchman and Gummere in *Great English Writers* have an interesting paragraph on this part of his career; "The Greeks needed money, which he went about raising, giving unsparingly of his own, and they needed brave, intelligent leaders. He dreamed, perhaps, of great glory in this last enterprise of his; he could rarely forget himself and the spectacular. Still when his whole life is taken into account, this effort to redeem his shattered character is greatly to his credit. He had little to sacrifice, to be sure, and much to gain—but it is perhaps better to say that he felt, in the bottom of his vigorous heart, that he had still a high ideal to serve. How near he came to a great gain may be

guessed from Trelawney's remark that 'had Byron lived to reach Salona as commissioner of the English loan, the dispenser of a million crowns would have been offered a golden one.'

In July 1823 Byron went to Cephalonia, where he spent the next six months carefully studying the whole situation in order to decide how best to act. On January 4th, 1824, he reached Missolonghi, where he was received by the Greeks with distinguished honor. He took in hand a body of undisciplined Suliotes, and made of them a dependable band of excellent fighters. Everywhere he won golden opinions, but the end was near. In February he was attacked by epileptic fits; in April he was attacked by a fever; on April 19th, 1824, he died. His last words were "Now I shall go to sleep". His body was taken to England, and, on the refusal by the dean to permit burial in Westminster Abbey, was interred in the family vault near Newstead.

It is necessary, in order to have a proper understanding of the poetry of Byron, to have a clear idea of the character and characteristics of the man himself. The following admirable summing-up is from the pen of Professor W. J. Alexander: "Opinions vary much in regard to Byron's work and character, but no one can deny him the possession of a strong and imposing personality — 'a personality,' said Goethe, 'in eminence such as has never been yet, and is not likely to come again'. The immediate impression he made upon the world at large was greater than that of any other English man of letters. A strong and passionate nature which he had inherited from his ancestors, was found in him united with an abnormal sensitiveness. He was naturally affectionate; his feelings for his friends

had the warmth of passion; we hear of his weeping, trembling, turning faint, after a fashion more usual with women than men. Indeed, Finlay, the historian, who knew him in his latest days in Greece says: 'It seemed as if two different souls occupied his body alternately. One was feminine and full of sympathy; the other masculine, characterized by clear judgment, and by a rare power of presenting for consideration these facts only which were required for forming a decision.' A nature so sensitive, and yet so ardent, and masterful, required the most careful discipline and culture to prevent its coming into collision with the world about it, and bringing upon itself all sorts of unhappiness. But this steadying discipline Byron altogether lacked; the circumstances of his life were to an unusual degree unfavorable to the production of a well-balanced character which might have adjusted itself to its environment. In his most impressionable years he was under the care of a foolish and hysterical mother. He knew that he was the heir to the title and an ancient estate; and this, especially in connection with the mean and narrow surroundings of his childhood days, would give him an importance in his own eyes, and in those of others, very unfavorable to a wholesome development of character. Neither in boyhood nor in his emergence into manhood, was there any wise friend or elder relative to influence him by wise example or by helpful advice. For his mother he could have no respect; his legal guardian, the Earl of Carlisle, kept aloof from him; he started in life very ignorant of the world, and with absurd ideas as to his own claims, from which he could only escape through experiences intensely painful to his proud and sensitive

spirit. He had all the wilfulness, moodiness, and folly of a spoiled child, and strangely enough the process of 'spoiling' was continued in his maturer life. 'He came,' says Macaulay, 'into the world; and the world treated him as his mother had treated him, sometimes with fondness, sometimes with cruelty, never with justice. It indulged him without discrimination and punished him without discrimination. He was truly a spoiled child, not merely the spoiled child of his parent, but the spoiled child of nature, the spoiled child of fortune, the spoiled child of fame, the spoiled child of society. His first poems were received with a contempt which, feeble as they were, they did not absolutely deserve. The poem which he published on his return from his travels was, on the other hand, extolled far above its merits. At twenty-four he found himself on the pinnacle of literary fame, with Scott, Wordsworth, Southey, and a crowd of other distinguished writers beneath his feet. There is scarcely an instance in history of so sudden a rise to so dizzy an eminence. Everything that could stimulate and everything that could gratify the strongest propensities of our nature, the gaze of a hundred drawing rooms, the acclamations of the whole nation, the applause of applauded men, the love of lovely women, all his world and all the glory of it were at once offered to a youth to whom nature had given violent passions, and whom education had never taught to control them. He lived as many men live who have no similiar excuse to plead for their faults. But his countrymen and countrywomen would love and admire him. They were resolved to see in his excesses only the flash and outbreak of that same fiery mind which glowed in his poetry. Everything it seemed,

was to be forgiven to youth, rank, and genius. Then came the reaction. Society capricious in its indignation, as it had been capricious in its fondness, flew into a rage with its froward and petted darling. He had been worshipped with an irrational idolatry. He was persecuted with an irrational fury.' The natural result of such experiences upon such a nature was the production of boundless egotism and self-consciousness."

Byron's biographer, the poet Moore, gives an interesting sketch of his personal appearance: "His head was remarkably small, so much so as to be rather out of proportion to his face. The forehead, though a little too narrow, was high and appeared more so from the hair being shaved over the temples, while the glossy, dark brown curls clustering over his head gave the finish to his beauty. When to this is added that his nose, though handsomely, was rather thickly shaped, that his teeth were white and regular, and his complexion colorless, as good an idea, perhaps, as it is in the power of mere words to convey may be conceived of his features. In height he was, as he himself has informed us, five feet eight inches and a half, and to the length of his limbs he attributed his being such a good swimmer. His hands were very white, and according to his own notion of the size of the hands indicating birth—aristocratically small. The lameness of his right foot, though an obstacle to grace, but little impeded the activity of his movements; and from this circumstance, as well as from the skill with which the foot was disguised by means of long trousers, it would be difficult to conceive a defect of this kind less obtruding itself as a deformity, while the diffidence which a constant consciousness of the deformity gave to his first approach and address made even lameness a source of interest."

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

- Born at London, January 22, 1788.
Removes with his mother to Aberdeen.
His father dies, 1791.
Attends Aberdeen Grammar School, 1794-98.
Succeeds to the peerage, 1794.
Removes to Nottingham, where he attends a school kept by Mr. Rogers, 1798.
Removes to London, where he attends Dr. Glennie's school, 1799.
Sent to Harrow, 1801.
Leads the school in rebellion against the appointment of a new headmaster, 1805.
Enters Trinity College, Cambridge, 1805.
Receives his Master of Arts degree, 1808.
Publishes *Hours of Idleness*, 1808.
Settles at Newstead Abbey, his ancestral seat, 1808.
Takes his seat in the House of Lords, 1809.
Publishes *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, 1809.
Travels on the Continent, 1809-11.
Returns to England, 1811.
His mother dies, 1811.
Publishes first two Cantos of *Childe Harold*, 1812.
Makes three speeches in the House of Lords, 1812.
Publishes *The Giaour* and *The Bride of Abydos*, 1813.
Publishes *The Corsair* and *Lara*, 1814.
Marries Miss Milbanke, 1815.
His daughter, Ada, born, 1815.
Separates from his wife, 1816.
Takes his departure for the Continent, 1816.

Forms the acquaintance of Shelley, 1816.

Takes up his residence in Venice, 181.

Publishes *Manfred*, 1817; *Beppo*, 1818; *Maseppa* and the first two Cantos of *Don Juan*, 1819; Cantos III and IV of *Don Juan*, *Marino Faliero*, *Sardanapalus*, *The Two Foscari*, and *Cain*, 1821.

Inherits a half of the Wentworth property from Lady Noel, and adds Noel to his name, 1822.

Becomes connected with Leigh Hunt's *Liberal*, 1822.

Publishes *The Vision of Judgment*, 1822.

Don Juan completed, 1823-24.

Takes part in the struggle for the independence of Greece, 1823.

Reaches Missolonghi, January 4, 1824.

Dies at Missolonghi, April 19, 1824.

APPRECIATIONS

"If in estimating Byron we cease to look for perfect poems and consider his work as a whole, we shall be more likely to do him justice. He has bequeathed to us a considerable body of poetry. Though much of it is commonplace, enough of it is still beautiful to us, enough of it still warm with the passion which inspired it, to make us thankful that he lived. We can hardly say that he had any message for the world. The world puzzled him, and he spent most of his life fighting it. There is abundant evidence, however, that he had begun to see more clearly into the mystery of life, and would sometime have been able to speak to his fellow-men more wisely. But whether he had a message or not, he stands for certain ideals. He was honest and sincere. He hated hypocrisy and shams. Even *Don Juan*, the poem for which he has been most

abused, is chiefly a protest against the vice of so-called respectable society. He was the champion of liberty, of political and religious freedom. In *Childe Harold*, in *The Prisoner of Chillon*, and in *Marino Faliero* he denounced tyranny. In *Cain* and in some of his short poems, he denounced religious prejudice and superstition. The gospel that he preached was the gospel of enlightenment." — *Ralph Hartt Bowles*.

"The poetry of Pope is not to-day appreciated as it was in his own time, for we regard it as excessively classical. It seems to us that the poetic art of that time had departed so far from human life and feeling that it had become artificial, and that genuine poetry was not again produced until the standards of poetic art had been modified by the influence of the Romantic Movement. In like manner Byron's poetry marks the crest of the wave of the Romantic Movement itself and is excessively Romantic. Poetry and criticism since his time have become less anarchistic and more constructive. As the poet of revolt Byron helped to rid the world of many abuses, but to-day revolution is not a dominant characteristic of society, and his vigorous poems of protest have lost much of their power. We need to yield, however, little or none of the charm and beauty of his lyric and descriptive passages, for they are founded, not on a transient condition of society, but on universal and permanent characteristics of nature and the human heart." — *Robert P. St. John*.

"He laid bare the cant of English society and the corruption of the aristocracy, and lashed them with a whip of scorpions. He illustrated and denounced the social tyranny by which thousands were driven into crime and prevented from returning to virtue. The

arrows of his scorn fell fast and thick among the defenders of political abuses; the renegade, the hypocrite, the bigot, were made to feel the full force of his merciless invective. Wielding an uncontrolled dominion over language, and profusely gifted with all the weapons of sarcasm, hatred and contempt, he battled fiercely in the service of freedom, and knew well how to overwhelm its adversaries with denunciations and stormy threats, with ridicule and irony, which should eat into their hearts as rust into iron."—*E. P. Whipple.*

"When Byron's eyes were shut in death,
We bow'd our head and held our breath.
He taught us little ; but our soul
Had *felt* him like the thunder's roll.
With shivering heart the strife we saw
Of passion with eternal law ;
And yet with reverential awe
We watched the fount of fiery life
Which served for that Titanic strife."

—*Matthew Arnold.*

"Two critics, as different as Swinburne and Matthew Arnold, agree in according to Byron's poetry 'the splendid and imperishable excellence which covers all his offences and outweighs all his defects: *the excellence of sincerity and strength.*' To be sure, he was often affected, hence neither sincere nor strong ; but when at his best, — when his emotion really mastered him, 'then at last came forth into light that true and puissant personality, with its direct strokes, its ever-welling force, its satire, its energy, and its agony.' There is a fascination to the reader in the mere sense of the power and ease with which the poet handles the language ; even when his expression is imperfect, it is

marked by perfect fluency and extemporaneousness. This force and impetuosity of his character drew him into sympathy with the mighty aspects of things; mountains and the ocean, the roar of the elements, tempest and shipwreck, and battles, are the spheres of description in which he most excels."—*W. J. Alexander.*

"Historically considered Byron is one of the greatest names of the century. It was he, says Mazzini, who introduced English literature to Europe; it was his poetry that fostered the romantic movement in Germany, France, and Italy. The French Revolution had rehabilitated man in his rights as an individual; it gave him a prospect of liberty, and the prospect was a passion, and realization a license. Byron came to voice for Europe this individualism and subjectivity, this longing for freedom and even license. This individualism of Byron is chiefly seen, with monotonous iteration, in the characters of his works. It is seen to better advantage in his passionate advocacy of individual liberty,—

'Yet, Freedom! yet thy banner torn, but flying,
Streams like the thunderstorm against the wind;'

it is seen as well in these descriptions of nature where the human spirit is aroused to sympathy with the wildness of the storm or the infinite sweep of ocean.

Critical opinion of Lord Byron's verse was never lower than it now is. When the glamor of the poet's personality passed away, his poetry, it was found, had lost much of its former interest. The Byronic attitude, with its melancholy posturing, its unsatisfied and uncertain longings, in a few years became a by-word; and with the decline of sentimentality fell the many characters of his works conceived in that mould. The incessant presence of the Byronic ego became wear-

some. In a clearer light, too, the faults of hurry and carelessness and improvisation became evident. Style as distinct from the content of thought told against him."—*Frederick Henry Sykes*.

"Byron was a personality of immense force. To his age he was a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, but one that led into deeper deserts of unfaith and negation. Such work as he had to do was a work of destruction; the age cried out for it, and he did it thoroughly. Of the higher powers of poetry he possessed few, and for them he cared little. He was a careless and hasty worker. In his own words, if he missed his first spring he went growling back to his jungle. That he was a great writer, one of the greatest, is as certain as that neither by the soul nor the body of his art can he take rank with the small company of supreme poets."—*William Vaughn Moody and Robert Morss Lovett*.

"The poetry of Lord Byron is in striking contrast to that of Wordsworth. The calm and meditative tone of the older poet is the very antithesis of the ardent energy of the younger. The 'primal sympathy' with nature and man, the wholesome optimistic philosophy of Wordsworth is met by the rebellious cynicism and obtrusive egotism of Byron. His poetry is always spirited, but never spiritual. At the same time his vital vigor is most impressive; his verse is aflame with passion.

'The cold in clime are cold in blood,
Their love can scarce deserve the name;
But mine was like the lava flood
That boils in Ætna's breast of flame.'

His worst faults are his misanthropy, his skepticism and his frequent lapses from the heights of pure

and noble passion to the low levels of grossness and vice. At his best Byron was master of a power which found expression in passages of stately eloquence. He re-established virility in English verse and enlivened it to a remarkable degree. If his verse aroused the hostile criticism of conservative critics, it aroused as fierce a partizanship among his revolutionary sympathizers. Lord Byron was the idol of thousands whose ideas were as radical as his. There grew to be a Byronic cult, and the influence of his poetry upon thought and style was felt throughout Europe for a generation." — *William Edward Symonds.*

"Byron's greatness as well as his weakness lay in the fact that from boyhood battle was the breath of his being. To tell him not to fight was like telling Wordsworth not to reflect, or Shelley not to sing. His instrument is a trumpet of challenge, and he lived, as he apparently died, in the progress of an unaccomplished campaign. His work is neither perfect architecture nor fine mosaic, but like that of his intellectual ancestors, the elder Elizabethans, whom he persistently maligned, it is all animated by the spirit of action and enterprise." — *Professor Nichol.*

"But, leaving the question of Byron's life, what are the distinctive features of his poetry? They are—superb force and imaginative daring, a masculine strength of style, an intensity of conception and vigor of execution which few English poets have ever rivalled. He has little play of fancy; it is in imagination he excels. His verse has a large and noble movement, and inspires the mind with an exhilarating sense of freedom. He was not a thinker, but he insensibly perceived and absorbed the new thought of his day, and gave it cour-

ageous expression. He did much to accelerate the decay of old institutions and the birth of new. He swept like a storm across the mind of Europe, and uttered in the language of the storm the new thoughts which were then trying to liberate and express themselves. To say that Byron is a great poet is not enough; he is among the greatest. It is the fashion now to depreciate his claims, and Matthew Arnold and Mr. Swinburne have both demonstrated the looseness of his rhymes, and his ignorance of metrical construction. To do this is easy. Byron aimed at force rather than at, and art was less fastidious in his day than ours. He wrote carelessly because he cared little for the criticism of his age, and was at war with it. But for a man ignorant of metrical construction he has done exceedingly well. He won the praise of Goethe, and the foremost place of influence in his time. He alone of the writers of his time shared with Scott a European reputation, and his reputation entirely eclipsed Scott's. Hitherto English poetry had been insulated; he lifted it into a cosmopolitan currency. In the large and startling effects of imagination few can surpass him. What picture of a Swiss glacier, in early morn when the mists are rolling off, can excel in truth of description and daring of imagination such lines as these? —

'The mists boil up around the glaciers; clouds
Rise curling fast beneath me, white and sulphury,
Like foam from the roused ocean of deep hell,
Whose every wave breaks on a living shore,
Heaped with the damned, like pebbles!'

It is in passages like these that the strength of Byron is seen: it is in virtue of poetic power like this that Byron has taken his place among the great poets of all time." — *W. J. Dawson.*

"Byron's fame, unequalled in his lifetime, underwent a rapid eclipse after his death. In the next generation the influence of Carlyle told heavily against his cynicism, his insincerity, his merely destructive and revolutionary aims ; the influence of Tennyson as heavily against his loose and random workmanship, his lack of the conscience in art and in ethics, of the earnestness, which Tennyson accustomed his own generation to demand of the poet. Subsequent movements of English poetry have been colored by Shelley or by Keats, nay by Pope and Prior ; but none has quickened at the spell of Byron. Even the transcendent renown of Byron among continental critics and poets of high rank has but slightly reacted upon his countrymen. The grounds of this attitude of English criticism are now purely literary. A generation which idolizes Shelley is less likely to resent Byron's hesitant theological scepticism than to wish, with Shelley, that it had been complete and unreserved. But Byron lacks supreme imagination. With boundless resources of invention, rhetoric, passion, wit, fancy, he has not the quality which creates out of sensation, or thought, or language, or all together, an action, a vision, an image, or a phrase which, while penetrated with the poet's individuality, has the air of a discovery, not an invention, and no sooner exists than it seems to have always existed. A creator in the highest sense Byron is not : but no other modern English verse bears so visibly the impress of all the energies, save the highest, which go to the making of poetry, as his." *C. H. Herford.*

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THE PRISONER OF CHILLON

A FABLE

I

My hair is gray but not with years,
Nor grew it white
In a single night,
As men's have grown from sudden fears.
My limbs are bowed, though not with toil,
But rusted with a vile repose,
For they have been a dungeon's spoil,
And mine has been the fate of those
To whom the goodly earth and air
Are banned, and barred — forbidden fare ; 10
But this was for my father's faith
I suffered chains and courted death ;
That father perished at the stake
For tenets he would not forsake ;

1. **My hair, etc.** What is the advantage in relating the story in the first person? How did Bonnivard appear at the time he is supposed to tell the story.

6. **vile repose.** Vile in the sense that the rest was compulsory and his life for years made useless.

10. **banned.** Denied.

11. **my father's faith.** Scarcely true. Bonnivard did not become a Protestant until after his release from the dungeon.

13. **at the stake.** The burning of heretics at the stake was a common practice about this time.

14. **tenets.** "The implication is that the belief was maintained with determination and firmness.

And for the same his lineal race 15
 In darkness found a dwelling-place ;
 We were seven — who now are one,
 Six in youth and one in age,
 Finished as they had begun,
 Proud of Persecution's rage ; 20
 One in fire, and two in field,
 Their belief with blood have sealed,
 Dying as their father died,
 For the God their foes denied ; —
 Three were in a dungeon cast, 25
 Of whom this wreck is left the last.

II

There are seven pillars of Gothic mould,
 In Chillon's dungeons deep and old,
 There are seven columns, massy and gray,
 Dim with a dull imprisoned ray, 30
 A sunbeam which hath lost its way,
 And through the crevice and the cleft
 Of the thick wall is fallen and left ;
 Creeping o'er the floor so damp,
 Like a marsh's meteor lamp : 35
 And in each pillar there is a ring,
 And in each ring there is a chain ;
 That iron is a cankering thing,
 For in these limbs its teeth remain,
 With marks that will not wear away, 40
 Till I have done with this new day,
 Which now is painful to these eyes,

22. sealed. Proved.

27. Gothic mould. In the Gothic style of architecture.

38. cankering. Eating into the flesh.

Which have not seen the sun so rise
 For years — I cannot count them o'er,
 I lost their long and heavy score
 When my last brother drooped and died,
 And I lay living by his side.

45

III

They chained us each to a column stone,
 And we were three — yet, each alone :
 We could not move a single pace,
 We could not see each other's face,
 But with that pale and livid light
 That made us strangers in our sight :
 And thus together — yet apart,
 Fettered in hand, but joined in heart,
 'Twas still some solace, in the dearth
 Of the pure elements of earth,
 To harken to each other's speech,
 And each turn comforter to each
 With some new hope, or legend old,
 Or song heroically bold ;
 But even these at length grew cold.
 Our voices took a dreary tone,
 An echo of the dungeon stone,
 A grating sound — not full and free,
 As they of yore were wont to be :
 It might be fancy — but to me
 They never sounded like our own.

50

55

60

65

45. **score.** Count.

57. **pure elements.** Probably light and fresh air.

59. **comforter.** What was the strongest bond that joined the brothers?

66. **of yore.** Of old, formerly.

IV

I was the eldest of the three,
 And to uphold and cheer the rest
 I ought to do — and did my best —
 And each did well in his degree.

70

The youngest, whom my father loved,
 Because our mother's brow was given
 To him, with eyes as blue as heaven —

75

For him my soul was sorely moved;
 And truly might it be distressed
 To see such bird in such a nest;
 For he was beautiful : day —

(When day was beautiful to me
 As to young eagles being free) —
 A polar day, which will not see
 A sunset till its summer's gone,

80

Its sleepless summer of long light,
 The snow-clad offspring of the sun :
 And thus he was as pure and bright,

85

And in his natural spirit gay,
 With tears for nought but others' ills,
 And then they flowed like mountain rills,
 Unless he could assuage the woe
 Which he abhorred to view below.

90

V

The other was as pure of mind,
 But formed to combat with his kind;
 Strong in his frame, and of a mood
 Which 'gainst the world in war had stood,
 And perished in the foremost rank
 With joy : — but not in chains to pine:

95

76. sorely moved. Why for him in particular?

His spirit withered with their clank,
 I saw it silently decline —
 And so perchance in sooth did mine: 100
 But yet I forced it on to cheer
 Those relics of a home so dear.
 He was a hunter of the hills,
 Had followed there the deer and wolf;
 To him this dungeon was a gulf, 105
 And fettered feet the worst of ills.

VI ✓

Lake Leman lies by Chillon's walls:
 A thousand feet in depth below
 Its massy waters meet and flow;
 Thus much the fathom-line was sent 110
 From Chillon's snow-white battlement,
 Which round about the wave intrals:
 A double dungeon wall and wave
 Have made — and like a living grave.
 Below the surface of the lake, 115
 The dark vault lies wherein we lay,
 We heard it ripple night and day;
 Sounding o'er our heads it knocked;
 And I have felt the winter's spray
 Wash through the bars when winds were high 120
 And wanton in the happy sky;
 And then the very rock hath rocked,
 And I have felt it shake, unshocked,

-
98. below. In the world below the skies.
 100. in sooth. In truth.
 102. these relics. His two brothers, all who were left of the family, with the exception of himself.
 105. a gulf. An abyss of w: e.
 107. Lake Leman. The Lake of Geneva.

Because I could have smiled to see
The death that would have set me free. 125

VII

I said my nearer brother pined,
I said his mighty heart declined,
He loathed and put away his food ;
It was not that 'twas course and rude,
For we were used to hunter's fare, 130
And for the like had little care :
The milk drawn from the mountain goat
Was changed for water from the moat,
Our bread was such as captives' tears
Have moistened many a thousand years, 135
Since man first pent his fellow men
Like brutes within an iron den ;
But what were these to us or him ?
These wasted not his heart or limb ;
My brother's soul was of that mould 140
Which in a palace had grown cold,
Had his free breathing been denied
The range of the deep mountain's side ;
But why delay the truth ? — he died.
I saw, and could not hold his head, 145
Nor reach his dying hand — nor dead, —
Though hard I strove, but strove in vain,
To rend and gnash my bonds in twain.
He died — and they unlocked his chain,
And scooped for him a shallow grave 150
Even from the cold earth of our cave.
I begged them, as a boon, to lay

145. **gnash.** Even tearing at them with his teeth.

152. **a boon.** A special favor.

His corse in dust whereon the day
Might Shine — it was a foolish thought,
But then within my brain it wrought, 155
That even in death his freeborn breast
In such a dungeon could not rest.
I might have spared my idle prayer —
They coldly laughed, and laid him there :
The flat and turfless earth above 160
The being we so much did love ;
His empty chain above it leant,
Such murder's fitting monument !

VIII

But he, the favorite and the flower,
Most cherished since his natal hour, 165
His mother's image in fair face,
The infant love of all his race,
His martyred father's dearest thought,
My latest care, for whom I sought
To hoard my life, that his might be 170
Less wretched now, and one day free ;
He, too, who yet had held untired
A spirit natural or inspired —
He, too, was struck, and day by day,
Was withered on the stalk away. 175
Oh, God ! it is a fearful thing
To see the human soul take wing
In any shape, in any mood :
I've seen it rushing forth in blood,
I've seen it on the breaking ocean 180
Strive with a swoln convulsive motion,
I've seen the sick and ghastly bed
Of Sin delirious with its dread :

But these were horrors — this was woe
 Unmixed with such — but sure and slow : 185
 He faded, and so calm and meek,
 So softly worn, so sweetly weak,
 So tearless, yet so tender, kind,
 And grieved for those he left behind ;
 With all the while a cheek whose bloom
 Was as a mockery of the tomb, 190
 Whose tints as gently sunk away
 As a departing rainbow's ray;
 An eye of most transparent light,
 That almost made the dungeon bright, 195
 And not a word of murmur, not
 A groan o'er his untimely lot, —
 A little talk of better days,
 A little hope my own to raise.
 For I was sunk in silence — lost 200
 In this last loss, of all the most ;
 And then the sighs he would suppress
 Of fainting nature's feebleness,
 More slowly drawn, grew less and less :
 I listened, but I could not hear ; 205
 I called, for I was wild with fear ;
 I knew 'twas hopeless, but my dread
 Would not be thus admonished ;
 I called, and thought I heard a sound —
 I burst my chain with one strong bound, 210
 And rushed to him : — I found him not,
 I only stirred in this black spot,

191. a mockery of the tomb. What is the meaning?

208. admonished. Warned.

211. I found. Note the effect of the repetition of the "I" in the succeeding lines.

I only lived, I only drew
 The accursed breath of dungeon-dew ;
 The last, the sole, the dearest link 215
 Between me and the eternal brink,
 Which bound me to my failing race,
 Was broken in this fatal place.
 One on the earth, and one beneath —
 My brothers — both had ceased to breathe : 220
 I took that hand which lay so still,
 Alas ! my own was full as chill ;
 I had not strength to stir, or strive,
 But felt that I was still alive —
 A frantic feeling, when we know 225
 That what we love shall ne'er be so.
 I know not why
 I could not die,
 I had no earthly hope but faith,
 And that forebade a selfish death. 230

IX

What next befell me then and there
 I know not well — I never knew —
 First came the loss of light, and air,
 And then of darkness too :
 I had no thought, no feeling — none — 235
 Among the stones I stood a stone,
 And was, scarce conscious what I wist,
 As shrubless crags within the mist ;

228 I could not die. There are many lines in *The Prisoner of Chillon* that sound like echoes of lines in *The Ancient Mariner*. Make a list of these.

230. a selfish death. His religious faith prevented his committing suicide.

238. what I wist. What I saw.

For all was blank, and bleak, and gray ;
 It was not night, it was not day ; 240
 It was not even the dungeon-light,
 So hateful to my heavy sight,
 But vacancy absorbing space,
 And fixedness without a place ;
 There were no stars, no earth, no time, 245
 No check, no change, no good, no crime,
 But silence, and a stirless breath
 Which neither was of life nor death ;
 A sea of stagnant idleness,
 Blind, boundless, mute, and motionless ! 250

X

A light broke in upon my brain, —
 It was the carol of a bird ;
 It ceased, and then it came again,
 The sweetest song ear ever heard,
 And mine was thankful till my eyes 255
 Ran over with the glad surprise,
 And they that moment could not see
 I was the mate of misery ;
 But then by dull degrees came back
 My senses to their wonted track ; 260
 I saw the dungeon walls and floor
 Close slowly round me as before,
 I saw the glimmer of the sun
 Creeping as it before had done,
 But through the crevice where it came 265
 That bird was perched, as fond and tame,
 And tamer than upon the tree ;
 A lovely bird, with azure wings,

268. a lovely bird. Would it have been better to have indicated a definite species of bird ?

And song that said a thousand things,
 And seem'd to say them all for me! 270
 I never saw its like before,
 I ne'er shall see its likeness more :
 It seemed like me to want a mate,
 But was not half so desolate,
 And it was come to love me when 275
 None lived to love me so again,
 And cheering from my dungeon's brink,
 Had brought me back to feel and think.
 I know not if it late were free,
 Or broke its cage to perch on mine, 280
 But knowing well captivity,
 Sweet bird ! I could not wish for thine !
 Or if it were, in winged guise,
 A visitant from Paradis
 For—Heaven forgive thine sight ! the while 285
 Which made me both to weep and smile —
 I sometimes deemed that it might be
 My brother's soul come down to me ;
 But then at last away it flew,
 And then 'twas mortal — well I knew, 290
 For he would never thus have flown,
 And left me twice so doubly lone,
 Lone as the corse within its shroud,
 Lone as a solitary cloud,
 A single cloud on a sunny day, 295
 While all the rest of heaven is clear,
 A frown upon the atmosphere,

277. *dungeon's brink.* The verge of the dungeon; the window on which the bird was perched.

281. *A light.* "A beautiful relief amid the horrors of imprisonment."

That hath no business to appear
When skies are blue, and earth is gay.

XI

A kind of change came in my fate, 300
My keepers grew compassionate ;
I know not what had made them so,
They were inured to sights of woe,
But so it was : — my broken chain
With links unfastened did remain, 305
And it was liberty to stride
Along my cell from side to side,
And up and down, and then athwart,
And tread it over every part ;
And round the pillars one by one, 310
Returning where my walk begun,
Avoiding only, as I trod,
My brothers' graves without a sod ;
For if I thought with heedless tread
My step profaned their lowly bed, 315
My breath came gaspingly and thick,
And my crushed heart fell blind and sick.

XII

I made a footing in the wall,
It was not therefrom to escape,
For I had buried one and all 320
Who loved me in a human shape ;
And the whole earth would henceforth be
A wider prison unto me :
No child, no sire, no kin had I,
No partner in my misery ; 325

301. grew compassionate. Why this change in the attitude of the keepers ?

I thought of this, and I was glad,
 For thought of them had made me mad ;
 But I was curious to ascend
 To my barred windows, and to bend
 Once more, upon the mountains high,
 The quiet of a loving eye.

330

XIII

I saw them, and they were the same,
 They were not changed like me in frame ;
 I saw their thousand years of snow
 On high — their wide long lake below,
 And the blue Rhone in fullest flow ;
 I heard the torrents leap and gush
 O'er channelled rock and broken bush ;
 I saw the white-walled distant town,
 And whiter sails go skimming down ;
 And then there was a little isle,
 Which in my very face did smile,

335

340

The only one in view ;
 A small green isle, it seemed no more,
 Scarce broader than my dungeon floor,
 But in it there were three tall trees,
 And o'er it blew the mountain breeze,
 And by it there were waters flowing,
 And on it there were young flowers growing,
 Of gentle breath and hue.

345

350

The fish swam by the castle wall,
 And they seemed joyous each and all ;
 The eagle rode the rising blast,

327. the blue Rhone. The river Rhone flows through the Lake of Geneva.

339. distant town. Villeneuve, an old Roman town.

341. a little isle. Not far from the castle.

Methought he never flew so fast
 As then to me he seemed to fly ; 355
 And then new tears came in my eye,
 And I felt troubled — and would fain
 I had not left my recent chain ;
 And when I did descend again,
 The darkness of my dim abode 360
 Fell on me as a heavy load ;
 It was as is a new-dug grave,
 Closing o'er one we sought to save,—
 And yet my glance, too much oppressed,
 Had almost need of such a rest. 365

XIV

It might be months, or years, or days,
 I kept no count, I took no note,
 I had no hope my eyes to raise,
 And clear them of their dreary mote ;
 At last men came to set me free, 370
 I asked not why, and recked not where ;
 It was at length the same to me,
 Fettered or fetterless to be,
 I learned to love despair.
 And thus when they appeared at last, 375
 And all my bonds aside were cast,
 These heavy walls to me had grown
 A hermitage—and all my own !
 And half I felt as they were come
 To tear me from a second home : 380
 With spiders I had friendship made,
 And watched them in their sullen trade,
 Had seen the mice by moonlight play,

371. Recked. Cared.

And why should I feel less than they?
We were all inmates of one place,
And I the monarch of each race,
Had power to kill—yet, strange to tell!
In quiet we had learned to dwell;
My very chains and I grew friends,
So much a long communion tends
To make us what we are:—even I
Regained my freedom with a sigh.

385

390

392. **with a sigh.** He scarcely wished to be free. There seems to be something in this last sentence of *The Prisoner of Chillon* almost uncannily connected with the life of Byron himself. The following quotations from *English Poetry: Its Principles and Progress* by Charles Mills Gayley and Clement C. Young (Macmillan) well illustrates this; "Despite his brilliant genius and wonderful poetic ability, Byron's decline in the favor of both English critic and English reader was as sure as his ascent was rapid. Nor are the causes far to seek. Byron was a poet of the Revolution. He caught the spirit of his age in representing the reaction of a new century against cant and hypocrisy in society, religion, and politics. He wrote, moreover, with an assured strength, a spirited abandon, a splendid 'sweep and energy' that at first carried all before him. His subjects were pleasing; his lyric and narrative intensity and his reckless humor compelled attention; his fascinating personality shone clear and winsome through every line of his work. And so, when his star arose, his contemporaries were first attracted, then they marvelled, then enthusiastically admired. But he wrote with little artistic finish; and many, especially those at whose social and religious ideals he had jeered, denounced his poetry as lacking in high seriousness, spirituality, comprehension of life, natural and human, reverence for the decent and divine. These charges were not altogether just: his style is rapid, nervous, direct, incisive, and exhilarating; and though his Titanic heroes in their revolt against authority may sometimes be theatrical, sometimes profane, still in *The Prisoner of Chillon* and *Prometheus* he shows a real sympathy for the martyrs of mankind;

in the later cantos of *Childe Harold* he sounds the note of patriotism and historic woe ; in many a poem, the diapason of nature in her changing moods. Much of his poetry, to be sure, was written for the fashion and the time ; that of course fails now of its appeal. His contemporaries of the sober kind found him (and with reason) not infrequently flippant. In his *Don Juan*, which some consider his best and most characteristic work, he seemed even to delight in defying the proprieties. His cynicism is often tedious, and his sincerity sometimes doubtful. So his star has for a season waned. But it is not burnt out ; merely eclipsed. As younger and more conventional poets pass from the zenith, and the fashion of radicalism returns, Byron will again be increasingly read and enjoyed. His *Childe Harold* will live as long as the historic sense remains with man ; and *Chillon*, *Maseppa*, *The Prophecy of Dante*, and *Don Juan*, while man is virile, adventurous, freedom-loving, passionate, and heroic."

popularized by Byron. In 1510 he succeeded his uncle, who had educated him, as prior of the Cluniac priory of St. Victor, close to Geneva. He naturally, therefore, opposed the attempts of the Duke of Savoy, aided by his relative, the bishop of the city, to maintain his claims as lord of Geneva. He was imprisoned by the duke at Gex from 1519 to 1521, lost his priory, and became more and more anti-Savoyard. In 1530 he was again seized by the duke and imprisoned for six years underground, in the castle of Chillon, till he was released in 1536 by the Bernese, who then wrested the land from the duke. He had been imprisoned for political reasons, for he did not become a Protestant till after his release, and then found that his priory had been destroyed in 1534. He obtained a pension from Geneva, and was four times married, but owing to his extravagance was always in debt. He was officially entrusted in 1542 with the task of compiling a history of Geneva from the earliest times. In 1551 his manuscript of the *Chroniques de Genève* (ending in 1530) was submitted to Calvin for correction, but it was not published until 1831. The work is uncritical and partial, but it is his best title to fame."

J. W. Hales in *Longer English Poems* (Macmillan) says: "*The Prisoner of Chillon* cannot be pronounced a masterpiece: to say nothing of several lapses and carelessness, there is a want of concentration in it; the purpose of the poem is somewhat vacillating. But it is a capital specimen of Byron's vigor and *verve*. The passage in which he tries his power of language to the utmost and displays best how remarkable that power was is Stanza IX."

1. **not with years.** Byron points out that this happened to Ludovica Sforza and others. He goes on to say: "The same is asserted of Marie Antoinette's, the wife of Louis the Sixteenth, though not in so short a period. Grief is said to have the same effect; to such and not to fear, this change in *hers* was to be attributed. The transformation was effected on the brief transit from Varennes to Paris. Our own Charles I. was another instance of the phenomenon, his hair turning gray during his confinement at Carisbrooke."

25. **a dungeon.** The dungeon in which Bonnivard was imprisoned is in reality large and airy. "It is spacious and fairly well lighted, and the play of the waves which wash its walls is reflected on the vaulted roof."

35. **marsh's meteor lamp.** Robert P. St. John says: "The gas which arises from decaying animal or vegetable matter often becomes luminous. The most familiar instance is the light that glimmers about many kinds of stale fungi. Such decay is the cause of "fox-fire" in rotten wood. In swamps the appearance is especially common; and it is said to have led wanderers with false hope into mud and water from which they have been unable to extricate themselves. In literature it is known as *ignus fatuus*, Friar Rush's Lantern, Will o' the Wisp, Etc." One of the most impressive sights in the dungeon as it is to-day is "the beams of the setting sun" streaming through the narrow loopholes into the gloomy recesses."

107. **Lake Leman.** The Lake of Geneva. The lake is about forty miles long and varies in width from one-half a mile to nine miles. Near the Castle of Chillon it is over one thousand feet deep. The ancient Roman name was Lemanus. Byron thus describes it in *Childe Harold*:

"Clear, placid Leman! thy contrasted lake,
With the wild world I dwelt in, is a thing
Which warns me, with its stillness, to forsake
Earth's troubled waters for a purer spring.
This quiet sail is as a noiseless wing
To waft me from distraction; once I loved
Torn ocean's roar, but thy soft murmuring
Sounds sweet as if a sister's voice reproved,
That I with stern delights should e'er have been so moved.

"It is the hush of night, and all between
Thy margin and the mountains, dusk, yet clear,
Mellowed and mingling, yet distinctly seen,
Save darkened Jura, whose cap heights appear
Precipitously steep; and drawing near,
There breathes a living fragrance from the shore,
Of flowers yet fresh with childhood; on the ear
Drops the light drip of the suspended oar,
Or chirps the grasshopper one good-night carol more."

111. **snow-white battlement.** "Chillon is one of the most picturesque castles in the world, its cold white walls standing out against the green hills that rise behind it, and falling into the bright blue waters of the lake."

115. below the surface. The floor of the dungeon is now about ten feet above the level of the lake and could never by any possibility have been below it.

136. man first pent. Robert P. St. John points out that "Byron never missed an opportunity to speak for liberty 'The object of the poem,' wrote Sir Walter Scott, 'is to consider captivity in the abstract and to mark its effects in gradually chilling the mental powers and benumbing and freezing the animal frame, until the unfortunate victim becomes, as it were, a part of his dungeon and identified with its charms.' By showing captivity in one of its most unjust aspects, Byron hoped to promote reform. He chose to portray imprisonment for the sake of religion, because he thought such imprisonment the most irrational and the least justifiable. Had he been better acquainted with the story of Bonivard, he would have found the latter's career unsuited to the purposes of his poem, for the old hero was unfortunately wavering and inconsistent in his religious belief."

189. for those. Hales notes that "there is much delicacy in this plural. By such a fanciful multiplying of the survivors the elder brother prevents self-intrusion; himself and his loneliness are -- it were kept out of sight and forgotten. There is a not uncharacteristic sensitiveness in the Scottish phrase 'them that's awa' of some single lost one. The grief is softened by vagueness. So too the Greeks used the plural."

252. the carol of a bird. Note that the prisoner is saved from "that deadly torpor, described with such masterly power in the 19th stanza, by the song of a bird, just as the Ancient Mariner is delivered from a like stagnancy by the sight of the fishes disporting themselves. The sympathies of his nature are awakened once more. His heart softens. He lives again."

341. a little isle. Byron says in a note on the poem: "Between the entrances of the Rhone and Villeneuve, not far from Chillon, is a small island; the only one I could perceive, in my voyage round and over the lake, within its circumference. It contains a few trees (I think not above three), and from its singleness and diminutive size has a peculiar effect upon the view."

392. with a sigh. A great deal has been made by literary critics of the supposed "Wordsworthian strain" in *The Prisoner of Chillon*. On this point Ethel Colburn Mayne says in *Byron*

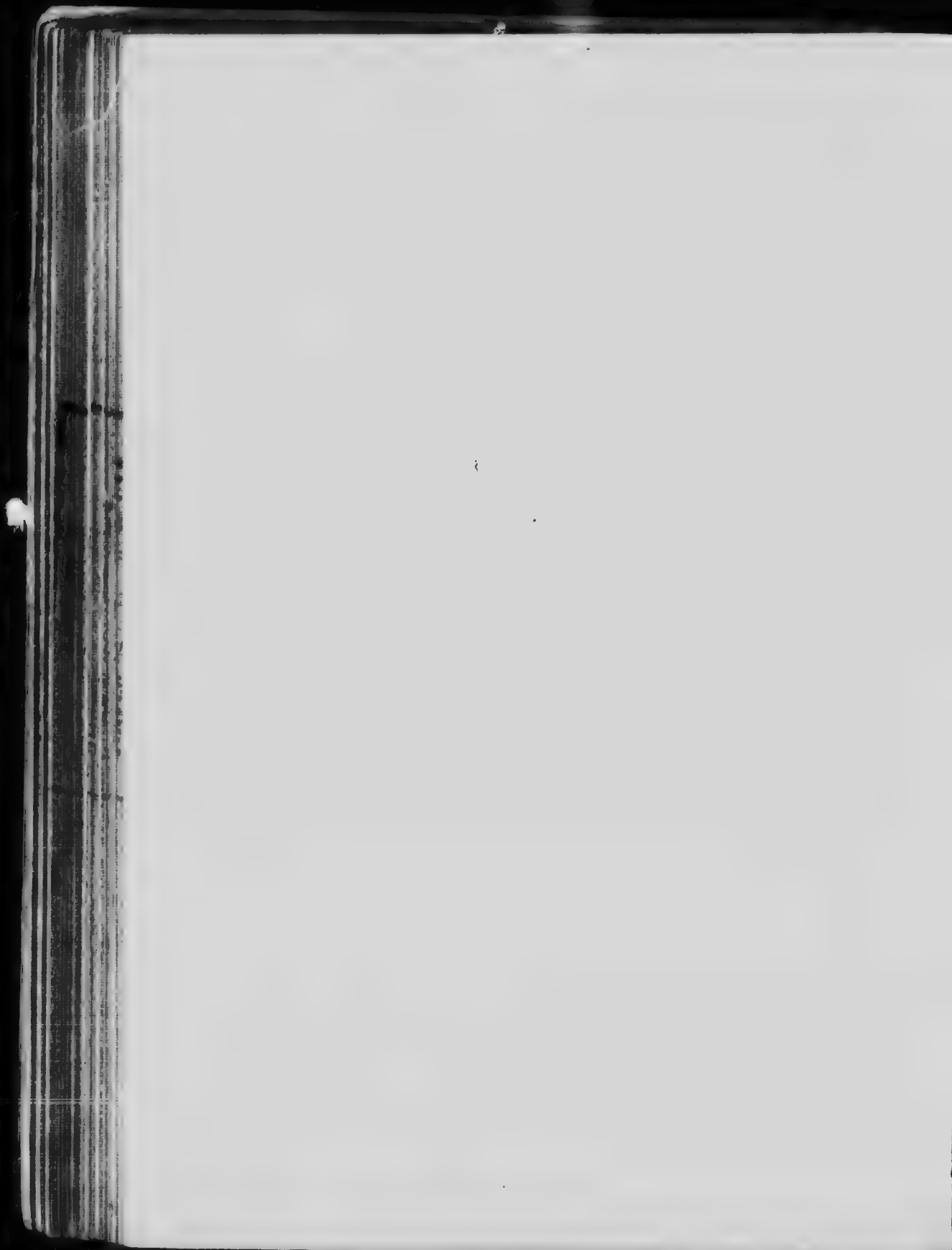
(Scribner) : " Our ludicrous familiarity with the opening lines of *The Prisoner of Chillon* is fatal to serious consideration of the poem. The critics of 1816 were insistent on the Wordsworthian strain. ' Lord Byron has evidently become a convert ; ' and no doubt the charming episodes of the bird —

' A lovely bird with azure wings,
And song that said a thousand things,
And seemed to say them all for me ! '

and the fish that swam by the castle wall,

' And they seemed joyous each and all. ' are reminiscent both in matter and manner. But, however we may value Wordsworth, it is Byron that we want from Byron. Nor could he have retained this stamp : his nature was rhetorical, and in rhetoric alone, at this period, could truly express itself. Later he was to find a more perfect means of self-utterance ; and that was as far removed from the Wordsworthian manner as the earth is from the skies. "

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON



ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Alfred Tennyson was born at Somersby, a small hamlet among the Lincolnshire wolds, on August 6th, 1809. His father, the Rev. George Clayton Tennyson, the vicar of Somersby, was a man of large and cultivated intellect, interested in poetry, mathematics, painting, music, and architecture, but somewhat harsh and austere in manner, and subject to fits of gloomy depression, during which his presence was avoided by his family; he was sincerely devoted to them, however, and himself supervised their education. His mother, Elizabeth Fytche, the daughter of the Rev. Stephen Fytche of Louth, was a kind-hearted, gentle, refined woman, beloved by her family and friends. Her influence over her sons and daughters was unbounded, and over none more so than Alfred, who in after life recognized to the full what he owed to his mother.

The family was large, consisting of twelve sons and daughters, of whom the eldest died in infancy. Alfred was the fourth child, his brothers Frederick and Charles being older than he. The home life was a very happy one. The boys and girls were all fond of books, and their games partook of the nature of the books they had been reading. They were given to writing, and in this they were encouraged by their father, who proved himself a wise and discriminating critic. Alfred early showed signs of his poetic bent; at the age of

twelve he had written an epic of four thousand lines, and even before this a tragedy and innumerable poems in blank verse. He was not encouraged, however, to preserve these specimens of his early powers, and they are now lost.

Alfred attended for a time a small school near his home, but at the age of seven he was sent to the Grammar School at Louth. While at Louth he lived with his grandmother, but his days at school were not happy, and he afterwards looked back over them with almost a shudder.¹ Before he was twelve he returned home, and began his preparation for the university under his father's care. His time was not all devoted to serious study, but was spent in roaming through his father's library, devouring the great classics of ancient and modern times, and in writing his own poems. The family each summer removed to Mablethorpe on the Lincolnshire coast. Here Alfred learned to love the sea in all its moods, a love which lasted through his life.

In 1827, after Frederick had entered Cambridge, the two brothers, Charles and Alfred, being in want of pocket money, resolved to publish a volume of poems. They made a selection from their numerous poems, and offered the book to a bookseller in Louth. For some unknown reason he accepted the book, and soon after, it was published under the title, *Poems by Two Brothers*. There were in reality three brothers, as some of Frederick's poems were included in the volume. The brothers were promised £20, but more than one half of this sum they had to take out in books. With the balance they went on a triumphal expedition to the sea, rejoicing in the successful launching of their first literary effort.

In 1828 Charles and Alfred Tennyson matriculated at Trinity College, Cambridge, where their elder brother Frederick had already been for some time. Alfred was a somewhat shy lad, and did not at once take kindly to the life of his college. He soon, however, found himself one of a famous society known as "The Apostles," to which belonged some of the best men in the University. Not one member of the "Apostles" at this time, but afterwards made a name for himself, and made his influence felt in the world of politics or letters. The society met at regular intervals, but Alfred did not take much part in the debates, preferring to sit silent and listen to what was said. All his friends had unbounded admiration for his poetry and unlimited faith in his poetic powers. This faith was strengthened by the award of the University Prize for English Verse to Alfred in June, 1829. He did not wish to compete, but on being pressed, polished up an old poem that he had written some years before, and presented it for competition, the subject being *Timbuctoo*. The poem was in blank verse and really showed considerable power; in fact it was a remarkable poem for one so young.

Perhaps the most powerful influence on the life of Tennyson was the friendship he formed while at Cambridge with Arthur Henry Hallam, the son of the historian, Henry Hallam. The two became inseparable friends, a friendship strengthened by the engagement of Hallam to the poet's sister. The two friends agreed to publish a volume of poems as a joint-production, but Henry Hallam, the elder, did not encourage the project, and it was dropped. The result was that in 1830, *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, was published with the name of

Alfred Tennyson alone on the title page. The volume was reviewed enthusiastically by Hallam, but was more or less slated by Christopher North in the columns of *Blackwoods' Magazine*. Tennyson was very angry about the latter review and replied to the reviewer in some caustic, but entirely unnecessary, verses.

In the same year Hallam and Tennyson made an expedition into Spain to carry aid to the rebel leader against the king of Spain. The expedition was not by any means a success. In 1831 Tennyson left Cambridge, without taking his degree, and shortly after his return home his father died. The family, however, did not remove from Somersby, but remained there until 1837. Late in 1832 appeared another volume entitled *Poems by Alfred Tennyson*. This drew upon the unfortunate author a bitterly sarcastic article in the *Quarterly*, written probably by its brilliant editor, John Gibson Lockhart. The result of this article was that Tennyson was silent for almost ten years, a period spent in ridding himself of the weaknesses so brutally pointed out by the reviewer.

In 1833, Arthur Henry Hallam died, and for a time the light of life seemed to have gone out for Alfred Tennyson. The effect of the death of Hallam upon the poet was extraordinary. It seemed to have changed the whole current of his life; indeed he is said, under the strain of the awful suddenness and unexpectedness of the event, to have contemplated suicide. But saner thoughts intervened, and he again took up the burden of life, with the determination to do what he could in helping others. From this time of storm and stress came *In Memoriam*.

From 1832 to 1842 Tennyson spent a roving life.

Now at home, now in London, now with his friends in various parts of England. He was spending his time in finishing his poems, so that when he again came before the world with a volume, he would be a master. The circle of his friends was widening, and now included the greater number of the master-minds of England. He was poor, so poor in fact that he was reduced to the necessity of borrowing the books he wished to read from his friends. But during all this time he never wavered in his allegiance to poetry; he had determined to be a poet, and to devote his life to poetry. At last in 1842 he published his *Poems* in two volumes, and the world was conquered. From this time onwards he was recognized as the leading poet of his century.

In 1845, Tennyson, poor still, was granted a pension of £200, chiefly through the influence of his friend Richard Monckton Milnes, and Thomas Carlyle. There was a great deal of criticism regarding this pension from sources that should have been favorable, but the general verdict approved the grant. In 1847 appeared *The Princess*, a poem, which, at that time, did not materially add to his fame; but the poet was now hailed as one of the great ones of his time, and much was expected of him.

In 1850 three most important events in the life of Tennyson happened. He published *In Memoriam*, in memory of his friend, Arthur Henry Hallam; he was appointed Poet Laureate, in succession to Wordsworth; and he married Emily Selwood, a lady to whom he had been engaged for seventeen years, but whom his poverty had prevented him from leading to the altar. From this time onwards the life of the poet flowed smoothly. He was happily married, his fame was established, his

books brought him sufficient income on which to live comfortable and well. From this point there is little to relate in his career, except the publication of his various volumes.

After his marriage Tennyson lived for some time at Twickenham, where in 1852 Hallam Tennyson was born. In 1851 he and his wife visited Italy, a visit commemorated in *The Daisy*. In 1853 they removed to Farringford at Freshwater in the Isle of Wight, a residence subsequently purchased with the proceeds of *Maud*, published in 1855. The poem had a somewhat mixed reception, being received in some quarters with unstinted abuse and in others with the warmest praise. In the year that *Maud* was published Tennyson received the honorary degree of D.C.L., from Oxford. In 1859 was published the first four of the *Idylls of the King*, followed in 1864 by *Enoch Arden and Other Poems*. In 1865 his mother died. In 1869 he occupied Aldworth, an almost inaccessible residence in Surrey, near London, in order to escape the annoyance of summer visitors to the Isle of Wight, who insisted on invading his privacy, which, perhaps, more than any other he especially valued.

From 1870 to 1880 Tennyson was engaged principally on his dramas—*Queen Mary*, *Harold*, and *Becket*,—but, with the exception of the last, these did not prove particularly successful on the stage. In 1880 *Ballads and Poems* was published, an astonishing volume from one so advanced in years. In 1882 the *Promise of May* was produced in public, but was soon withdrawn. In 1884 Tennyson was raised to the peerage as Baron Tennyson of Aldworth and Farringford, after having on two previous occasions refused a baronetcy. In

1885 *Tiresias and Other Poems* was published. In this volume was published *Balin and Balun*, thus completing the *Idylls of the King*, which now assumed their permanent order and form. *Demeter and Other Poems* followed in 1889, including *Crossing the Bar*. In 1892, on October 6th, the poet died at Aldworth, "with the moonlight upon his bed and an open Shakespeare by his side." A few days later he was buried in Westminster Abbey, by the side of Robert Browning, his friend and contemporary, who had preceded him by only a few years.

Carlyle has left us a graphic description of Tennyson as he was in middle life: "One of the finest-looking men in the world. A great shock of rough, dusky dark hair; bright, laughing hazel eyes; massive aquiline face—most massive yet most delicate; of sallow brown complexion, almost Indian-looking; clothes cynically loose, free-and-easy; smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musically metallic—fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous; I do not meet in these late decades such company over a pipe! We shall see what he will grow to." To this may be added a paragraph from Caroline Fox: "Tennyson is a grand specimen of a man, with a magnificent head set on his shoulders like the capital of a mighty pillar. His hair is long and wavy and covers a massive head. He wears a beard and mustache, which one begrudges as hiding so much of that firm, powerful, but finely-chiselled mouth. His eyes are large and gray, and open wide when a subject interests him; they are well shaded by the noble brow, with its strong lines of thought and suffering. I can quite understand Samuel Lawrence calling it the best balance of head he had ever seen."

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

Born, August 6, 1809, at Somersby, Lincolnshire.
Goes to Louth Grammar School, 1816.

Publishes, along with his brother Charles, *Poems by Two Brothers*, 1827.

Goes to Trinity College, Cambridge, 1828.

Forms friendship with Arthur Henry Hallam, 1828.

Wins Vice-Chancellor's Gold Medal for his poem *Timbuctoo*, 1829.

Publishes *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, 1830.

Makes an expedition to the Pyrenees with Arthur Henry Hallam, 1830.

Leaves Cambridge, owing to the illness of his father, 1831.

Visits the Rhine with Arthur Henry Hallam, 1832

Publishes *Poems by Alfred Tennyson*, 1832.

Arthur Henry Hallam dies, 1833.

Removes from Somersby to High Beech in Epping Forest, 1837.

Publishes *Poems* in two volumes, 1842.

Granted a pension of £200 from the Civil List, 1845.

Publishes *The Princess*, 1847.

Publishes *In Memoriam*, 1850.

Appointed Poet Laureate, 1850.

Marries Miss Emily Selwood, 1850.

Tours southern Europe with his wife, 1851.

Hallam Tennyson born, 1852.

Writes *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, 1852.

Takes up his residence at Farringford in the Isle of Wight, 1853.

Lionel Tennyson born, 1854.

Writes *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, 1855.

The University of Oxford confers on him the degree of D. C. L. 1855.

Publishes *Maud and Other Poems*, 1855.

Purchases Farringford, 1856.

Publishes *Idylls of the King*, 1859.

Writes his *Welcome to Alexandra*, 1863.

Publishes *Enoch Arden*, 1864; *The Holy Grail*, 1869.

His mother dies, 1865.

Purchases land at Haslemere, Surrey, 1868, and begins erection of Aldworth.

Publishes *Queen Mary*, 1875; the drama successfully performed by Henry Irving, 1876.

Publishes *Harold*, 1876.

His drama *The Falcon* produced, 1869.

Seeks better health by a tour on the Continent ... his son Hallam, 1880.

Publishes *Ballads and Other Poems*, 1880.

His drama *The Cup* successfully performed, 1881.

His drama *The Promise of May* proves a failure, 1882.

Raised to the peerage as Baron Tennyson of Aldworth and Farringford, 1884.

Publishes *Becket*, 1884.

His son Lionel dies, 1885.

Publishes *Tiresias and Other Poems*, 1885. This volume contains *Balin and Balan*, thus completing his *Idylls of the King*.

Publishes *Demeter and Other Poems*, 1889.

Dies at Aldworth, October 6, 1892, and is buried in Westminster Abbey.

The Death of Oenone is published, 1892.

APPRECIATIONS

" Since the days when Dryden held office no Laureate has been appointed so distinctly pre-eminent above all his contemporaries, so truly the king of the poets, as he upon whose brows now rests the Laureate crown. Dryden's grandeur was sullied, his muse was venal, and his life was vicious ; still in his keeping the office acquired a certain dignity ; after his death it declined into the depths of degradation, and each succeeding dullard dimmed its failing lustre. The first ray of hope for its revival sprang into life with the appointment of Southey, to whom succeeded Wordsworth, a poet of worth and genius, whose name certainly assisted in resuscitating the ancient dignity of the appointment. Alfred Tennyson derives less honor from the title than he confers upon it ; to him we owe a debt of gratitude that he has redeemed the laurels with his poetry, noble, pure, and undefiled as ever poet sung." — *Walter Hamilton.*

" Tennyson is many sided ; he has a great variety of subjects. He has treated of the classical and the romantic life of the world ; he has been keenly alive to the beauties of nature ; and he has tried to sympathize with the social problems that confront mankind. In this respect he is a representative poet of the age, for this very diversity of natural gifts has made him popular with all classes. Perhaps he has not been perfectly cosmopolitan, and sometimes the theme in his poetry has received a slight treatment compared to what might have been given it by deeper thinking and more philosophical poets, but he has caught the spirit of the age and has expressed its thought, if not always forcibly, at least more beautifully than any other poet." — *Charles Read Nutter.*

"In technical elegance, as an artist in verse, Tennyson is the greatest of modern poets. Other masters, old and new, have surpassed him in special instances; but he is the only one who rarely nods, and who always finishes his verse to the extreme. Here is the absolute sway of metre, compelling every rhyme and measure needful to the thought; here are sinuous alliterations, unique and varying breaks and pauses, winged flights and falls, the glory of sound and color everywhere present, or, if missing, absent of the poet's free will. The fullness of his art evades the charm of spontaneity. His original and fastidious art is of itself a theme for an essay. The poet who studies it may well despair, he can never excel it; its strength is that of perfection; its weakness, the ever-perfection which marks a still-life painter."—*Edmund Clarence Stedman.*

"A striking quality of Tennyson's poetry is its simplicity, both in thought and expression. This trait was characteristic of his life, and so we naturally expect to find it in his verse. Tennyson was too sincere by nature, and too strongly averse to experimenting in new fields of poetry, to attempt the affected or unique. He purposely avoided all subjects which he feared he could not treat with simplicity and clearness. So, in his shorter poems, there are few obscure or ambiguous passages, little that is not easy of comprehension. His subjects themselves tend to prevent ambiguity or obscurity. For he wrote of men and women as he saw them about him, of their joys and sorrows, their trials, their ideals,—and in this was nothing complex. Thus there is a homely quality to his poems, but they are kept from the commonplace by the great tenderness of his

feeling. Had Tennyson been primarily of a metaphysical or philosophical mind all this might have been different. True, he was somewhat of a student of philosophy and religion, and some of his poems are of these subjects, but his thought even here is always simple and plain, and he never attempted the deep study that was not characteristic of his nature. No less successful is he in avoiding obscurity in expression. There are few passages that need much explanation. In this he offers a striking contrast to Browning, who often painfully hid his meaning under complex phraseology. His vocabulary is remarkably large, and when we study his use of words, we find that in many cases they are from the two-syllabled class. This matter of choice of clear, simple words and phrases is very important. For, just so much as our attention is drawn from what a poet says to the medium, the language in which he says it, so much is its clearness injured. Vividly to see pictures in our imagination or to be affected by our emotions, we must not, as we read, experience any jar. In Tennyson we never have to think of his expressions—except to admire their simple beauty. Simplicity and beauty, then, are two noticeable qualities of his poetry.” — *Charles Read Nutter*.

“An idyllic or picturesque mode of conveying his sentiments is the one natural to Tennyson, if not the only one permitted by his limitations. He is a born observer of physical nature, and, whenever he applies an adjective to some object or passingly alludes to some phenomenon which others have but noted, is almost infallibly correct. He has the unerring first touch which in a single line proves the artist; and it justly has been remarked that there is more true English

landscape in many an isolated stanza of *In Memoriam* than in the whole of *The Seasons*, that vaunted descriptive poem of a former century."—*Edmund Clarence Stedman*.

"In describing scenery, his microscopic eye and marvellously delicate ear are exercised to the utmost in detecting the minutest relations and most evanescent melodies of the objects before him, in order that his representation shall include everything which is important to their full perfection. His pictures of rural English scenery give the inner spirit as well as the outward form of the objects, and represent them, also, in their relation to the mind which is gazing on them. The picture in his mind is spread out before his detecting and dissecting intellect, to be transformed to words only when it can be done with the most refined exactness, both as regards color and form and melody."—*E. P. Whipple*

"For the most part he wrote of the every day loves and duties of men and women; of the primal pains and joys of humanity; of the aspirations and trials which are common to all ages and all classes and independent even of the diseases of civilization, but he made them new and surprising by the art which he added to them, by beauty of thought, tenderness of feeling, and exquisiteness of shaping."—*Stopford A. Brooke*.

"The tenderness of Tennyson is one of his remarkable qualities—not so much in itself, for other poets have been more tender—but in combination with his rough powers. We are not surprised that his rugged strength is capable of the mighty and tragic tenderness of *Rispaah*, but we could not think at first that he could feel and realize the exquisite tenderness of *Elaine*. It

is a wonderful thing to have so wide a tenderness, and only a great poet can possess it and use it well."—*Stopford A. Brooke.*

"Tennyson is a great master of pathos ; knows the very tones that go to the heart ; can arrest every one of these looks of upbraiding or appeal by which human woe brings the tear into the human eye. The pathos is deep ; but it is the majesty not the prostration of grief."—*Peter Bayne.*

"Indeed the truth must be strongly borne in upon even the warmest admirers of Tennyson that his recluse manner of life closed to him many avenues of communication with the men and women of his day, and that, whether as a result or cause of his exclusiveness, he had but little of that restless, intellectual curiosity which constantly whets itself upon new experiences, finds significance where others see confusion, and beneath the apparently commonplace in human character reaches some harmonizing truth. *Rispah* and *The Grandmother* show what a rich harvest he would have reaped had he cared more frequently to walk the thoroughfares of life. His finely wrought character studies are very few in number, and even the range of his types is disappointingly narrow."—*Pelham Edgar.*

"No reader of Tennyson can miss the note of patriotism which he perpetually sounds. He has a deep and genuine love of country, a pride in the achievements of the past, a confidence in the greatness of the future. And this sense of patriotism almost reaches insularity of view. He looks out upon the larger world with a gentle commiseration, and surveys its un-English habits and constitution with sympathetic contempt. The patriotism of Tennyson is sober rather than glow-

ing ; it is meditative rather than enthusiastic. Occasionally indeed, his words catch fire, and the verse leaps onward with a sound of triumph, as in such a poem as *The Charge of the Light Brigade* or in such a glorious ballad as *The Revenge*. Neither of these poems is likely to perish until the glory of the nation perishes, and her deeds of a splendid chivalrous past sink into oblivion, which only shameful cowardice can bring upon her. But as a rule Tennyson's patriotism is not a contagious and inspiring patriotism. It is meditative, philosophic, self-complacent. It rejoices in the infallibility of the English judgment, the eternal security of English institutions, the perfection of English forms of government."— *W. J. Dawson*.

"Tennyson always speaks from the side of virtue ; and not of that new and strange virtue which some of our later poets have exalted, and which, when it is stripped of its fine garments, turns out to be nothing else than the unrestrained indulgence of every natural impulse ; but rather of that old fashioned virtue whose laws are 'self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,' and which finds its highest embodiment in the morality of the *New Testament*. There is a spiritual courage in his work, a force of fate which conquers doubt and darkness, a light of inward hope which burns dauntless under the shadow of death. Tennyson is the poet of faith ; faith as distinguished from cold dogmatism and the acceptance of traditional creeds ; faith which does not ignore doubt and mystery, but triumphs over them and faces the unknown with fearless heart. The effect of Christianity upon the poetry of Tennyson may be felt in its general moral quality. By this it is not meant that he is always preaching. But at the same

time the poet can hardly help revealing, more by tone and accent than by definite words, his moral sympathies. He is essentially and characteristically a poet with a message. His poetry does not exist merely for the sake of its own perfection of form. It is something more than the sound of one who has a lovely voice and can play skilfully upon an instrument. It is a poetry with a meaning and a purpose. It is a voice that has something to say to us about life. When we read his poems we feel our hearts uplifted, we feel that, after all it is worth while to struggle towards the light, it is worth while to try to be upright and generous and true and loyal and pure, for virtue is victory and goodness is the only fadeless and immortal crown. The secret of the poet's influence must lie in his spontaneous witness to the reality and supremacy of the moral life. His music must thrill us with the conviction that the humblest child of man has a duty, an ideal, a destiny. He must sing of justice and of love as a sure reward, a steadfast law, the safe port and haven of the soul."—*Henry Van Dyke.*

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*It teaches us to hold
life cheap when the
nation's safety is at stake*

THE REVENGE

A BALLAD OF THE FLEET

I

At Flores in the Azores Sir Richard Grenville lay,
And a pinnace like a flutter'd bird, came flying from far
away :

"Spanish ships of war at sea ! we have sighted fifty-
three !"

Then swear Lord Thomas Howard : "Fore God I am
no coward ;

But I cannot meet them here, for my ships are out of
gear,

And the half my men are sick. I must fly, but follow⁵
quick.

We are six ships of the line ; can we fight with fifty-
three ?"

II

Then spake Sir Richard Grenville : "I know you are
no coward ;

You fly them for a moment to fight with them again.

But I've ninety men and more that are lying sick
ashore.

I should count myself the coward if I left them, my¹⁰
Lord Howard,

1. **Flores.** Pronounced as a dissyllable. It was the most
westerly of the Azores. **Azores.** Pronounced as a trisyllable.

10. **Ninety men.** Over one-half of Sir Richard's crew of
two hundred men were sick and unfitted for service.

To these Inquisition dogs and the devildoms of Spain."

III

So Lord Howard past away with five ships of war that
day,

Till he melted like a cloud in the silent summer heaven ;
But Sir Richard bore in hand all his sick men from the
land

15

Very carefully and slow,

Men of Bideford in Devon,

And we laid them on the ballast down below ;

For we brought them all aboard,

And they blest him in their pain, that they were not left
to Spain,

20

To the thumbscrew and the stake, for the glory of the
Lord.

IV

He had only a hundred seamen to work the ship and to
fight

And he sailed away from Flores till the Spaniard came
in sight,

With his huge sea-castles heaving upon the weather
bow.

" Shall we fight or shall we fly ?

25

Good Sir Richard, tell us now,

For to fight is but to die !

17. **Bideford**. In Devonshire, one of the chief ports of England. It is pronounced as a trisyllable.

21. **thumbscrew . . . stake**. Torture and burning; typical punishments used by the Inquisition. **the glory of the Lord**. So that God would have greater glory.

24. **sea-castles**. Built up at the stern and bow like castles. **weather bow**. To windward, the side from which the wind is blowing.

There'll be little of us left by the time this sun be set."
And Sir Richard said again : " We be all good English
men.

Let us hang these dogs of Seville, the children of the
devil,

For I never turn'd my back upon Don or devil yet."

30

V

Sir Richard spoke and he laugh'd, and we roar'd a
hurrah, and so

The little Revenge ran on sheer into the heart of the
foe,

With her hundred fighters on deck, and her ninety
sick below ;

For half of their fleet to the right and half to the left
were seen,

35

And the little Revenge ran on thro' the long sea-lane
between.

VI

Thousands of their soldiers look'd down from their
decks and laugh'd,

Thousands of their seamen made mock at the mad little
craft

Running on and on, till delay'd

By their mountain-like San Philip that, of fifteen
hundred tons,

40

And up-shadowing high above us with her yawning
tiers of guns,

Took the breath from our sails, and we stay'd.

30. *Seville*. Accented on the first syllable.

31. *Don*. A Spanish title of honor.

VII

And while now the great San Philip hung above us
 like a cloud
 Whence the thunderbolt will fall
 Long and loud, 45
 Four galleons drew away
 From the Spanish fleet that day,
 And two upon the larboard and two upon the starboard
 lay,
 And the battle-thunder broke from them all.

VIII

But anon the great San Philip, she bethought herself
 and went 50
 Having that within her womb that had left her ill
 content ;
 And the rest they came aboard us, and they fought
 us hand to hand,
 For a dozen times they came with their pikes and
 musqueteers,
 And a dozen times we shook 'em off as a dog that
 shakes his ears,
 When he leaps from the water to the land. 53

IX

And the sun went down, and the stars came out far
 over the summer sea,
 But never ceased a moment the light of the one and the
 fifty-three.
 Ship after ship, the whole night long, their high-built
 galleons came,

Ship after ship, the whole night long, with her battle-
thunder and flame ;
Ship after ship, the whole night long, drew back with
her dead and her shame. 60
For some were sunk and many were shatter'd, and so
could fight us no more —
God of battles, was ever a battle like this in the world
before ?

X

For he said " Fight on ! fight on ! "
Tho' his vessel was all but a wreck ;
And it chanced that, when half of the short summer
night was gone, 65
With a grisly wound to be drest he had left the deck,
But a bullet struck him that was dressing it suddenly
dead,
And himself he was wounded again in the side and the
head,
And he said " Fight on ! fight on ! "

XI

And the night went down, and the sun smiled out far
over the summer sea, 70
And the Spanish fleet with broken sides lay around us
all in a ring ;
But they dared not touch us again, for they fear'd that
we still could sting,
So they watch'd what the end would be.

61. **some where sunk.** Two vessels were sunk, but two more were disabled.

62. **God of battles.** See *Psalm XXIV*, 8.

65. **short summer night.** The battle began at 3 o'clock in the afternoon and lasted for fifteen hours.

And we had not fought them in vain,
 But in perilous plight were we, 75
 Seeing forty of our poor hundred were slain,
 And half of the rest of us maim'd for life
 In the crash of cannonades and the desperate strife ;
 And the sick men down in the hold were most of them
 stark and cold,
 And the pikes were all broken or bent, and the powder
 was all of it spent ; 80
 And the mast and the rigging were lying over the side ;
 But Sir Richard cried in his English pride,
 " We have fought such a fight for a day and a night
 As may never be fought again !
 We have won great glory, my men ! 85
 And a day less or more
 At sea or ashore,
 We die — does it matter when ?
 Sink me the ship, Master Gunner — sink her, split her
 in twain !
 Fall into the hands of God, not into the hands of
 Spain ! " 90

XII

And the gunner said, " Ay, ay, " but the seamen made
 reply :
 " We have children, we have wives,
 And the Lord hath spared our lives.
 We will make the Spaniard promise, if we yield, to let
 us go ;
 We shall live to fight again and to strike another
 blow. " 95
 And the lion there lay dying, and they yielded to the
 foe.

96. the lion. Sir Richard Grenville.

XIII

And the stately Spanish men to their flagship bore him
 then,
 Where they laid him by the mast, old Sir Richard
 caught at last,
 And they praised him to his face with their courtly
 foreign grace ;
 But he rose upon their decks, and he cried :
 " I have fought for Queen and Faith like a valiant
 man and true ;
 I have only done my duty as a man is bound to do :
 With a joyful spirit I Sir Richard Grenville die ! "
 And he fell upon their decks, and he died.

100

XIV

And they stared at the dead that had been so valiant
 and true,
 And had holden the power and glory of Spain so cheap
 That he dared her with one little ship and his English
 few ;
 Was he devil or man ? He was devil for aught they
 knew,
 But they sank his body with honor down into the deep,
 And they mann'd the Revenge with a swarthier alien
 crew,
 And away she sail'd with her loss and long'd for her
 own ;
 When a wind from the lands they had ruin'd awoke
 from sleep,
 And the water began to heave and the weather to
 moan,

103

110

110. swarthier alien crew. Dark-faced Spaniards.

112. the lands, etc. The West Indies and South America.

*2nd ed. read of
 honor*

And or ever that evening ended a great gale blew,
And a wave like the wave that is raised by an earth-
quake grew, 115
Till it smote on their hulls and their sails and their
masts and their flags,
And the whole sea plunged and fell on the shot-
shatter'd navy of Spain,
And the little Revenge herself went down by the Island
crags
To be lost evermore in the main.

118. *the island crags.* The Island of St. Michaels in the Azores.

NOTES ON THE REVENGE

This poem was first published in *The Nineteenth Century* for March, 1878, under the title of *Sir Richard Grenville: A Ballad of the Fleet*, and subsequently in *Ballads and Poems* in 1880. "The first line," says Hallam Tennyson, "was on my father's desk for two years, but he set to work and finished the ballad at last all at once in a day or two. He wrote to my mother: 'Sir Richard Grenville in one ship, *The Revenge*, fought fifty-three Spanish ships of the line for fifteen hours: a tremendous story outrivalling Agincourt.' Carlyle's comment on the poem was: 'Eh! Alfred, you have got the grip of it.'"

The sources upon which Tennyson drew for his material were Sir Walter Raleigh's *Report of the truth of the Fight about the Isles of Azores this Last Summer* and James Anthony Froude's *England's Forgotten Worthies* in Volume I of *Short Studies on Great Subjects*. Robert Louis Stevenson in the chapter entitled *The English Admirals* in *Virginibus Puerisque* tells the story as follows; "I must tell one more story, which has lately been made familiar to us all, and that in one of the noblest ballads in the English language. I had written my tame prose abstract, I shall beg the reader to believe, when I had no notion that the sacred bard designed an immortality for Grenville. Sir Richard Grenville was Vice-Admiral to Lord Thomas Howard, and lay off the Azores with the English squadron in 1591. He was a noted tyrant to his crew: a dark bullying fellow apparently; and it is related of him that he would chew and swallow wineglasses by way of convivial levity, till the blood ran out of his mouth. When the Spanish fleet of fifty sail came within sight of the English, his ship *The Revenge* was the last to weigh anchor, and was so far circumvented by the Spaniards, that there were but two courses open — either to turn her back upon the enemy or sail through one of his squadrons. The first alternative Gren-

ville dismissed as dishonorable to himself, his country and Her Majesty's ship. Accordingly he chose the latter, and steered into the Spanish armament. Several vessels he forced to luff and fall under his lee; until, about three o'clock of the afternoon, a great ship of three decks of ordnance took the wind out of his sails and immediately boarded. Thenceforward and all night long, the *Revenge* held her own single-handed against the Spaniards. As one ship was beaten off, another took its place. She endured according to Raleigh's computation, 'eight hundred shots of great artillery, besides many assaults and entries.' By morning the powder was spent, the pikes all broken, not a stick was standing, 'nothing left over head either for flight or defence: ' six feet of water in the hold; almost all the men hurt, and Grenville himself in a dying condition. To bring them to this pass a fleet of fifty sail had been mauling them for fifteen hours, the *Admiral of the Hulks* and the *Ascension* of Seville had both gone down alongside, and two other vessels had taken refuge on shore in a sinking state. In Hawke's words they had 'taken a great deal of drubbing.' The captain and crew thought they had done about enough; but Grenville was not of this opinion; he gave orders to the master gunner, whom he knew to be a fellow after his own stamp, to scuttle the *Revenge* where she lay. The others, who were not mortally wounded like the Admiral, interfered with some decision, locked the master gunner in his cabin, after having deprived him of his sword for he manifested an intention to kill himself if he were not to sink the ship; and sent to the Spaniards to demand terms. They were granted. The second or third day after, Grenville died of his wounds aboard the Spanish flagship, leaving his contempt upon the 'traitors and dogs' who had not chosen to do as he did and engage fifty vessels, well-found and fully manned, with six inferior craft ravaged by sickness and short of stores. He at least, he said, had done his duty, as he was bound to do, and looked for everlasting fame."

In commenting upon the story Stevenson very acutely remarks: "I wonder how many people have been inspired by this mad story, and how many battles have been actually won for England in the spirit thus engendered. It is only with a measure of habitual foolhardiness that you can be sure, in the common run of men, of courage on a reasonable occasion. An army or a

fleet if it is not led by quixotic fancies, will not be led far by terror of the Provost Marshal." Froude says: "The action struck a deeper terror, though it was but the action of a single ship, into the hearts of the Spanish people; it dealt a more deadly blow upon their fame and moral strength than the Armada itself."

Sir Richard Grenville was born about 1541. In youth he is said to have served against the Turks and to have specially distinguished himself. In 1571 and again in 1584 he sat in Parliament as one of the members for Cornwall, of which county he was sheriff in 1577. In 1585, acting for his cousin Sir Walter Raleigh, he was in command of seven ships which sailed from England for the colonization of Virginia. In the next year he again visited Virginia and on the return harried the Azores Islands and took many Spanish prisoners. From 1583 to 1588 he was entrusted with the preparations for the defence of the southern coast. In 1591 he met his death as related in the ballad. He was "a man of intolerable pride and insatiable ambition; very unquiet in his mind and greatly affected to war, of nature very severe, so that his own people hated him for his fierceness and spoke very hardly of him; but also a man of great and stout courage, who had performed many valiant acts and was greatly feared in the Azores." The story of his chewing wineglasses, however, was probably an invention of the Spaniards. At the time Grenville was greatly blamed for his action, which was ascribed to his "obstinate and violent temper," and he was also censured for his "flagrant disobedience to the orders of his commanding officer." It was in defence of his cousin that Sir Walter Raleigh wrote the account before mentioned.

The chorus of praise which greeted *The Revenge* on its first publication has not diminished. The estimate of Morton Luce sums up the general opinion of the reading public and the literary critics alike: "In movement the ballad of *The Revenge* closely resembles *The Battle of the Baltic* by Campbell; and it has one or two recollections of Macaulay's *Armada*. Campbell's ballad, however, is almost symmetrical, but Tennyson allows himself so much license of construction, that in spite of some rhythmic sequences, the poem leaves on the mind no distinct impression of form; and thus he gives a more than Elizabethan freedom to his work. Otherwise, in simplicity, force, swiftness, spirit—in all that appertains to the daring of the old English sea-dogs, the ballad is magnificent."

2. **a pinnace.** This pinnace had been detached from the English squadron under the Earl of Cumberland, which was cruising off the coast of Portugal, and was sent to warn Howard of the approach of the Spanish fleet.

3. **fifty-three.** Of the fifty-three vessels all but twenty were transports and provision ships. The *Revenge* was engaged with fifteen ships in all.

4. **Lord Thomas Howard.** The second son of Thomas, Duke of Norfolk and himself the first Earl of Suffolk. He was born on August 24th, 1561. He was a man of distinguished courage, and marked political ability. In addition to filling many high commands at sea, he also held important offices in the state, finally becoming Lord High Treasurer of England. He died on May 26th, 1626.

12. **Inquisition dogs.** "Of all things Spanish the most hateful to Englishmen, then and afterwards, was the so-called Holy Inquisition, an organization whose business it was to detect and punish heresy."

36. **the little Revenge.** The *Revenge* was of 500 tons burden and carried a crew of 250 men. Parrot and Long in *English Poems* say: "She was one of the best ships of the English navy. Drake, the greatest of all Elizabethan sailors, chose her to carry his flag against the Spanish Armada. But she was a notoriously unlucky ship, having run aground and capsized several times before she was finally lost. A sailor of that day called her 'a ship loaden and full-fraught with ill success.' But her final defeat was more glorious than many victories."

40. **San Philip.** Raleigh says: "The great *San Philip* being in the wind of him, and coming towards him, becalmed his sails in such sort, as the ship could neither way nor feel the helm; so huge and high cargued was the Spanish ship, being of a thousand and five hundred tons." The ship had three tiers of guns, seventy in all.

89. **Sink me the ship.** Raleigh says that Sir Richard "commanded the master gunner, whom he knew to be a resolute man to split and sink the ship, that thereby nothing might remain of glory and victory to the Spaniards, seeing that in so many hours they were not able to take her, having had about fifteen hour's time, fifteen thousand men, and fifty-three sail of men of war to perform it withal."

101. **I have fought.** Grenville's last words were: "Here die I, Richard *Greenfield*, with a joyful and quiet mind, for that I have ended my life as a true soldier ought to do, that hath fought for his country, Queen, religion, and honor. Whereby my soul most joyfully departeth out of this body, and shall always leave behind it the fame of a valiant and true soldier that hath done his duty as he was bound to do."

112. **they had ruin'd.** The wind came from the west and north-west. The Spaniards had almost entirely ruined the countries of the New World by their indiscriminate plundering and their cruelty.

114. **that evening.** It was several days later. Shortly after the battle with the *Revenge* a fleet of merchantmen joined the the Spaniards, making 140 ships in all. Only 32 of these reached a Spanish harbor.

119. **lost evermore.** Archibald MacMechan says: "The whole transaction has been carefully studied by a most competent authority, Mr. Julian S. Corbett. From a military point of view, no end was attained by the sacrifice of the *Revenge* and her crew. Grenville's duty as a naval commander was to get his sick men on board and rejoin his squadron with all speed. If six ships against fifty-three was too great odds, one against fifty-three was sheer madness. Grenville could have easily made his escape, for the *Revenge*, a first class 'long ship' of the new English model, could easily out-sail the lumbering Spanish galleons, but he chose deliberately to sail in the opposite direction through a gap in the Spanish fleet which was approaching in four divisions. His motive appears to have been pure bravado, like Monson in his single vessel backing his topsail and waiting for the three Spaniards detached from the convoy of the plate fleet to take him: but they did not accept his insolent challenge. It was like Raleigh leading the van into Cadiz harbor in 1596, disdaining to answer the flanking fire of the whole galleon squadron except by a blare of his trumpets, while he steered the *War Sprite* straight at the great *San Philip*, resolved to be revenged for the *Revenge*."

Gerald Massey has written an excellent ballad entitled *Sir Richard Grenville's Last Fight, 1591* to be found in full in *Poetry of Empire* edited by John and Jean Lang (T. C. & E. C. Jack). The last four stanzas may be quoted:

They had not heart to dare fulfil
The stern Commander's word :
With swelling hearts and welling eyes
They carried him aboard
The Spaniards' ship, and round him stand
The Warriors of his wasted band :
Then said he, feeling death at hand :

*" Here die I, Richard Grenville,
With a joyful and quiet mind ;
I reach a soldier's end, I leave
A soldier's fame behind,
Who for his Queen and Country fought,
For Honour and Religion wrought,
And died as a true Soldier ought."*

Earth never returned a worthier trust
For Hand of Heaven to take
Since Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Was cast into the lake,
And the King's grievous wounds were dressed,
And healed, by weeping Queens, who blessed,
And bore him to a valley of rest.

Old Heroes, who could grandly do
As they could greatly dare ;
A vesture, very glorious,
Their shining spirts wear,
Of noble deeds! God give us grace,
That we may see such face to face
In our great day that comes apace.

ROBERT BROWNING

ROBERT BROWNING

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Robert Browning was born in Camberwell, London, on May 7th, 1812. He was exceptionally fortunate in his early surroundings. His father, a clerk in the Bank of England, was a man of scholarly tastes, fond of books, and fonder of discussing them with his family and friends; he was also possessed of sufficient means to gratify these tastes and to afford his son an ample education. His mother was Scotch, a type, as Carlyle says, of the true Scottish gentlewoman. She was fond of music, deeply religious, and devoted to her gifted son. Both parents early recognized the boy's undoubted poetic bent and encouraged him in every possible way.

Browning received the greater part of his education at private academies and at home. He did not attend any of the great Public Schools, neither was he a student of Oxford or Cambridge. At the age of ten he was sent to a school near his home, kept by a Mr. Ready, where he remained until he was fourteen. Subsequently he read at home with a private tutor and at the age of seventeen attended some of the classes at the University of London. His time, however, seems to have been devoted principally during these years to the study of poetry. When he was eight years of age he read Pope's translation of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. At the age of twelve he wrote a

number of poems, which were bound in a manuscript book, but these contained little promise of his future greatness, and were in no way different from somewhat clever verse written by other precocious boys. He early familiarized himself with the great Elizabethan poets and with Byron, but it was not until he fell under the influence of Shelley and Keats — the books were procured for him by his mother, the bookseller to whom she applied for Shelley's works adding on his own account three volumes of Keats — that the boy began to realize his own powers and to cultivate them. He early made up his mind to devote himself to poetry, and to this purpose he remained constant during his life.

At the age of twenty, in the year 1833, Browning's first printed poem, *Pauline*, was published, at the expense of his aunt, and received some very favorable notices from the critics of the time. The *Athenæum* was specially complimentary: "There is not a little true poetry in this very little book; here and there we have a touch of the mysterious which we cannot admire; and now and then a want of true melody which we can forgive, with perhaps more abruptness than is necessary; all that, however, is as a grain of sand in a cup of pure water, compared to the nature, and passion, and fancy of the poem." On the other hand, the *Literary Gazette* characterized the book as "a dreamy volume without an object, and unfit for publication."

In 1833-34, the poet, at the invitation of a friend, for whom he acted as secretary, paid a visit to Russia, afterwards extending his travels into Italy. In 1834 he was back in London engaged in literary work, and in 1835 *Paracelsus* was published. This book procured for him the acquaintance and friendship of the

chief literary men of the day, including Leigh Hunt, Barry Cornwall, Dickens, and Wordsworth. In the same year he was introduced to Macready, the actor, who suggested that he should write a tragedy to be produced on the stage. The result of this suggestion was *Strafford*, but the play did not prove a success, and was withdrawn after five nights.

From 1835 to 1846, Browning spent the greater part of his time in London, engaged in the production of his poems and dramas. He made several trips to Italy, the sea-voyage in 1838 being noteworthy as it resulted in *How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*. In 1840 *Sordello* was published, followed in the next year by *Pippa Passes*, issued as No. 1 of a series of volumes entitled *Bells and Pomegranates*. In rapid succession followed *King Victor and King Charles*, *Dramatic Lyrics*, *The Return of the Druses*, *A Blot on the 'Scutcheon*, and *Colombe's Birthday*. In all seven volumes were published before the end of 1845.

In 1845 Browning met Elizabeth Barrett, who at this time had gained some considerable reputation as a writer of verse. Miss Barrett was an invalid and spent her time principally on a sofa. Her father had peculiar ideas as to his daughter; he did not wish her to travel, even with the hope of benefiting her health, neither did he desire that she should be married. Browning early saw that it would be useless to expect that Mr. Barrett would consent to his daughter's marriage and resolved to take her from her home without consulting her father. On the 12th of September, 1846, Miss Barrett stole secretly from the house, and the two poets were married at the parish church of Marylebone. Shortly afterwards they left England together and took up

their residence in Florence. Frequently they visited England, but for the most part their time was spent in Italy. At Florence their son, Robert Barrett Browning was born in 1849. Browning never regretted his action in marrying Miss Barrett. The marriage was in every respect an ideal one. The two had every taste in common and were devoted to one another.

From his marriage the life of Browning was singularly uneventful, varied only by the publication of his various volumes. In 1846 appeared the eighth and last volume of *Bells and Pomegranates*, containing *Luria* and *A Soul's Tragedy*. In 1850, *Christmas Eve and Easter Day* was published, followed in 1855 by *Men and Women*. In 1861 Mrs. Browning died and was buried in Florence. The poet, after this sad event, returned to London, where he lived until his death.

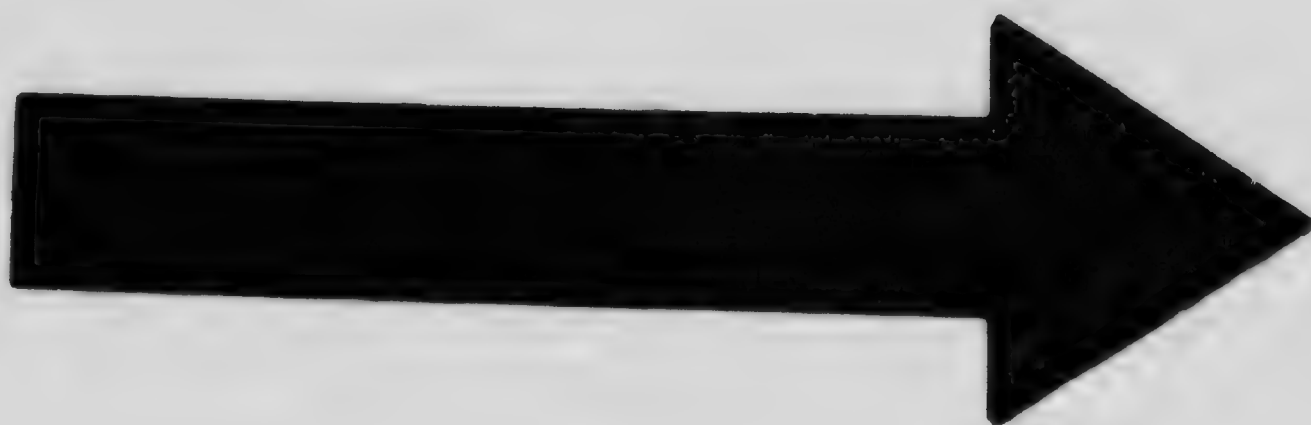
In 1864 *Dramatis Personæ* was published, and five years later, *The Ring and the Book*, Browning's great work, was given to the world. The poem is in blank verse and contains 21,000 lines. In 1867 the University of Oxford conferred on Browning the degree of Master of Arts. Later, in 1884, the University of Edinburgh granted him the degree of Doctor of Laws. He was now beginning to be recognized as a true poet, and to take his own place in the realm of letters.

Browning's remaining works were published between 1871 and 1889. The more important of these are; *Balaustion's Adventure*, *Fifine at the Fair*, *Red-Cotton Nightcap Country*, *Aristophanes' Apology*, *The Inn Album*, *La Saisias and the Two Poets of Croisic*, *Dramatic Idylls*, *Ferishtah's Fancies*, and *Asolando*.

The latter years of Browning's life were passed in happiness and prosperity. He lived for the most part

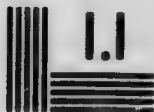
in London, making, however frequent visits to the continent, and especially to his beloved Italy. He was surrounded by troops of friends, was welcomed everywhere in society, and given his due mead of praise as one of the leading poets of his time. Perhaps his only regret was that his wife had not lived to share with him his fame, and to rejoice with him in his success. He died at Venice on December 12th, 1889, the day on which his last volume *Asolando* was published. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

William Sharp in his *Life of Browning* says : " Bayard Taylor, in his travel-sketches published under the title *At Home and Abroad* has put on record how he called upon the Brownings one afternoon in September, at their rooms in Devonshire Street, and found them on the eve of their return from Italy. In his cheerful alertness, self-possession, and genial suavity Browning impressed him as an American rather than an Englishman, though there can be no question but that no more thorough Englishman than the poet ever lived. It is a mistake, of course, to speak of him as a typical Englishman ; for typical he was not, except in a very exclusive sense. Bayard Taylor describes him in reportorial fashion as being apparently about seven-and-thirty, with his dark hair already streaked with gray about the temples : with a fair complexion, just tinged with faintest olive : eyes large, clear, and gray, with nose strong and well-cut, mouth full and rather broad, and chin pointed, though not prominent : about the medium height, strong in the shoulders, but slender at the waist, with movements expressive of a combination of vigor and elasticity. With due allowance for the passage of five-and-thirty years, this description



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would not be inaccurate of Browning the Septuagenarian." Elisabeth Luther Cary adds: "His appearance during the later years of his life was one of undiminished vitality; his noble gray head was set on a remarkably sturdy form, and his clear, keen eyes maintained their brightness. He had not the ruddy English complexion, but a color that has been described as the tint of old ivory. His voice continued genial and ringing to the last."

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

Born May 7, 1812, at Camberwell, London.

Goes to a school kept by the Rev. Thomas Ready, 1822.

Makes acquaintance with the works of Shelley and Keats, 1826.

Attends classes at the University of London, 1830.

Publishes *Pauline*, 1833.

Visits St. Petersburg as secretary of the Russian consul-general at London, 1833-34.

Publishes *Paracelsus*, 1835.

Removes from Camberwell to Hatcham, 1835.

His drama *Strafford* presented, 1837.

Pays his first visit to Italy, 1838.

Meets for the first time Mr. Kenyon, 1839.

Publishes *Sordello*, 1840 and *Pippa Passes*, 1841.

Begins his correspondence with Elizabeth Barrett, 1844.

Marries Elizabeth Barrett, September 12th, 1846.

Goes to Paris with his wife, September 19th, 1846.

Takes up his residence in Florence, 1847.

His son Robert Barrett Browning born, 1849; his mother dies in the same year.

Returns to England, 1851.

Becomes intimate with Dante Gabriel Rossetti, 1852.

Publishes *Men and Women*, 1855.

He and his wife receive on the death of Mr. Kenyon a legacy of 10,000 guineas, 1856.

Mrs. Browning dies June 29th, 1861.

Takes up his permanent residence in London, 1861.

His father dies, 1866.

The degree of Master of Arts conferred on him by the University of Oxford, 1867.

Publishes *The Ring and the Book*, 1868-69.

Writes *Hervé Riel* for the benefit of the French sufferers in the Franco-German war, 1871.

Publishes *Fifine at the Fair*, 1872.

Refuses nomination as Lord Rector of the University of Glasgow, 1875 and Lord Rector of St. Andrew's University, 1877.

The London Browning Society organized, 1881.

Receives degree of LL.D. from the University of Edinburgh, 1884.

Made Corresponding Secretary of the Royal Academy, 1886.

Dies at Venice, December 12th, 1889.

Asolando published on the day of his death, 1889.

APPRECIATIONS

"Browning has a wonderful gift of soul-penetration, of looking into and through other persons. He divines what they are, how they think, and what they are worth, with the swift, sure eye of keenest inspiration. He thus reads the open secrets of all kinds of characters, with the same utmost sympathy and loyalty. His imagination takes this direction when most active,

of seeing into other natures and realizing them as if they were his own. He has an extensive and varied learning, which he employs with great skill, as it is always suffused with imagination and feeling. His vivid imagination, quick and penetrative in power, discerns beauty with keenest eye; and truth opens to his magic touch. He brings to the treatment of his wide-ranging subjects a knowledge minute and profound, in art and literature, history and science, romance and music. He has a remarkable acquaintance with and insight into life and character in all countries and periods. In many directions he has an eager and never satisfied acquisitiveness; not for mere facts, but for knowledge that interprets the larger issues of life. He does not care for science or philosophy in themselves, or for any other knowledge, save in so far as it illustrates human nature, and gives him a clearer insight into its meaning and purpose. To know man is the one passion and one delight of his life; and he thinks no search wasted which brings him closer comprehension of an individual soul, and of its own special experiences. His knowledge of man, and of what enters into his success and failure, is of the widest and truest kind."—*George Willis Cooke.*

"The three generations of readers who have lived since Browning's first publication have seen as many attitudes taken towards one of the ablest poetic spirits of the century. To the first he appeared an enigma, a writer hopelessly obscure, perhaps not even clear in his own mind, as to the message he wished to deliver; to the second he appeared a prophet and a philosopher, full of all wisdom and subtlety, too deep for common mortals to fathom with line and plummet,—concealing

below green depths of ocean priceless gems of thought and feeling ; to the third, a poet full of inequalities in conception and expression, who has done many good things well and has made many grave failures.

"No poet in our generation has fared so ill at the hands of the critics. Already the Browning library is large. Some of the criticism is good ; much of it, regarding the author as a philosopher and symbolist, is totally askew. Reams have been written in interpretation of *Childe Roland*, an imaginative fantasy composed in one day. Abstruse ideas have been wrested from the simple story of *My Last Duchess*. His poetry has been the stamping-ground of theologians and the centre of prattling literary circles. In this tortuous maze of futile criticism the one thing lost sight of is the fact that the poet must be judged by the standards of art. It must be confessed, however, that Browning is himself to blame for much of the smoke of commentary that has gathered round him. He has often chosen the oblique expression where the direct would serve better ; often interpolated his own musing subtleties between the reader and the life he would present ; often followed his theme into intricacies beyond his own power to resolve into the simple forms of art. Thus it has come about that misguided readers became enigma hunters, and the poet their Sphinx.

"The real question with Browning, as with any poet, is, what is his work and worth as an artist ? What of human life has he presented, and how clear and true are his presentations ? What passions, what struggles, what ideals, what activities of men has he added to the art world ? What beauty and dignity, what light has he created ? How does he view life :

with what hope, or aspiration, or strength? These questions may be discussed under his sense and mastery of form, and under his views of human life.

"Browning's sense of form has often been attacked and defended. The first impression upon reading him is of harshness amounting to the grotesque. Rhymes often clash and jangle like the music of the savages. Such rhymes as

'Fancy the fabric . . .
Ere mortar dab brick,'

strain dignity and beauty to the breaking-point. Archaic and bizarre words are pressed into service to help out the rhyme and metre; instead of melodic rhythm there are harsh and jolting combinations; until the reader brought up in the traditions of Shakespeare, Milton, and Tennyson is fain to cry out, this is not poetry!

"In internal form as well, Browning often defies the established laws of literature. Distorted and elliptical sentences, long and irrelevant parentheses, curious involutions of thought, and irregular or incoherent development of the narrative or the picture, often leave the reader in despair even of the meaning. Nor can these departures from orderly beauty always be defended by the exigencies of the subjects. They do not fit the theme. They are the discords of a musician who either has not mastered his instrument or is not sensitive to all the finer effects. Some of his work stands out clear from these faults: *A Toccata of Galuppi's*, *Love Among the Ruins*, the Songs from *Pippa Passes*, *Apparitions*, *Andrea del Sarto*, and a score of others might be cited to show that Browning could write with a sense of form as true, and an ear as deli-

cate, as could any poet of the century, except Tennyson.

"To Browning belongs the credit of having created a new poetic form,—the dramatic monologue. In this form the larger number of his poems are cast. Among the best examples are *My Last Duchess*, *The Bishop Orders His Tomb*, *The Laboratory*, and *Confessions*. One person only is speaking, but reveals the presence, action, and thoughts of the others who are in the scene at the same time that he reveals his own character, as in a conversation in which but one voice is audible. The dramatic monologue has in a peculiar degree the advantages of compression and vividness, and is, in Browning's hands, an instrument of great power.

"The charge of obscurity so often made against Browning's poetry must in part be admitted. As has been said above he is often led off by his many-sided interests into irrelevancies and subtleties that interfere with simplicity and beauty. His compressed style and his fondness for unusual words often make an unwarranted demand upon the reader's patience. Such passages are a challenge to his admirers and a repulse to the indifferent. Sometimes, indeed, the ore is not worth the smelting; often it yields enough to reward the greatest patience."—*Franklin T. Baker*.

"Browning has a perfect command over versification when he chooses to employ it, and great richness of melody. He has a remarkable versatility in metre and rhythm, though he is reckless of rules and defiant of precedents in his artistic elaboration. Many of his shorter poems show that he has the gift of music when he chooses to use it: but he prefers to give heed mainly to the content rather than to the form of his verse. Deliberately he refused to go with the multitude in their

efforts to turn poetry into a matter of rhythm and fine-sounding words. His thoughtful and deep-searching way of looking at life does not adapt itself to smooth-flowing verse; but the stormy and passionate life he studies most of all needs a method of interpretation suited to its own characteristics. His style is his own, the natural way of expression with him. He says straight-out the thought which is in his mind, in the manner in which it first presents itself to him. He is full, however, of recondite and subtle allusions, a mere glance and then on that requires the fullest knowledge to follow, and the fullest apprehension to get the full meaning and bearing thereof. His keen, swift mind eludes us without the closest attention. There are vigor, robustness, and a manhood of the most strenuous kind in his verse. He does not resort to dainty devices; he indulges in no idle conceits; but he has a strong man's insistence on strong things." — *George Willis Cooke.*

"Browning's early lyrics and occasional passages of recent date, show that he has melodious intervals, and can be very artistic with no loss of original power. Often the ring of his verse is sonorous, and overcomes the jagged consonantal diction with stirring lyrical effect. The *Cavalier Tunes* are examples. These show that Browning can put in verse the spirit of a historic period, and has, or had, in him the making of a lyric poet. How fresh and wholesome this work. Finer still that superb stirrup-piece, best of its class in the language, *How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*. *Ratibon* and *The Lost Leader*, no less, are poems that fasten themselves upon literature, and will not be forgotten. The old fire flashes out, thirty

years after, in *Hervé Riel*, another vigorous production—unevenly sustained, but superior to Longfellow's legendary ballads and sagas. From among lighter pieces I will select for present mention two, very unlike each other; one, as delightful a child's poem as ever was written, in fancy and airy extravagance, and having a wildness and pathos all its own—the daintiest bit of folk-lore in English verse,—to what should I refer but *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*? The author made a strong bid for the love of children, when he placed 'By Robert Browning' at its head, in the collection of his poems. The other, *Evelyn Hope*, appeals like Wordsworth's *She Dwelt among the Untrodden Ways* and Landor's *Rose Aylmer*, to the hearts of learned and unlearned, one and all."—*Edmund Clarence Stedman*.

"It is the style of Browning which does most to puzzle the beginner. In many of the short poems, indeed, there is nothing to complain of. In the longer poems the language is often puzzling. At its worst his style is at once verbose and elliptic. He sometimes makes his sentences long and confusing by the use of many parentheses. He sometimes cuts them down to the quick, by omission of necessary parts of speech. They may be easy enough to understand when the omissions have once been supplied, yet not so easy when you do not even realize that there are omissions, but attribute the confusion to your own stupidity or the profundity of the poet. He omits prepositions, articles, personal and relative pronouns, and auxiliary verbs at his pleasure. He employs uncalled-for and graceless inversions. He adopts slang or obsolete or provincial words, and sometimes uses them wrong. All these eccentricities are confusing and alarming when taken

separately, but when employed in combination they lead to passages of real difficulty. One can, it is true, read a great deal of Browning, without troubling to unravel any of them. One can discourse at length with eloquence of his philosophy and his 'message,' without comprehending the language in which he expresses himself. But the serious student knows that if a great writer is worth reading he is worth understanding." — *Frederick Ryland.*

"Browning never seems to be telling us what he thinks and feels ; but he puts before us some man, male or female, whose individuality soon becomes as clear and absolute as our own. The poet does not appear ; indeed so wholly is he merged in the creature of his own will that, as we hear that creature speak, his creator is, for the time, completely forgotten." — *Richard Grant White.*

"Browning is one of the healthiest of modern English poets ; there is nothing morbid in his writings ; he takes an intensely earnest view of life and its duties. Taking the completed round of his work the reader will find that he is essentially optimistic. To him life is a glad, sweet thing ; so he will rejoice therein and be glad. Life is a serious and earnest piece of business —yet it is also a beautiful and joyous thing withal, and to be enjoyed as the Giver meant it to be." — *Augustine Birrell.*

"Browning has contempt for hopelessness, hatred for despair, joy for eager hope, faith in perfection, pity for all effort which only claimed this world, for all love which was content to begin and end on earth, reproof for all goodness and beauty which was content to die forever." — *Stopford A. Brooke.*

"Browning is always masculine and vigorous. Original modern poetry is apt to be enervating, producing the effect of intellectual luxury; or if, like Wordsworth's, it is as cool and bright as morning dew, it carries us away to the world of mountain solitudes and transcendental dreams. Mr. Browning's — while it strains our intellect to the uttermost, as all really intellectual poetry must, and has none of the luxuriance of fancy and wealth of sentiment which relaxes the fibre of the mind — keeps us still in a living world; not always the modern world, very seldom, indeed, the world of modern England, but still in contact with keen, quick, vigorous life."—*R. H. Hutton*.

"The prevalent impression which the work of Browning leaves upon the reader is twofold: he makes us feel the greatness of his mind, and the intensity and breadth of his sympathies. It is a vast world of thought to which Browning introduces his reader. He claims from him absolute attention, the entire absorption of the neophytes, whose whole moral earnestness is given to his task. Like all neophytes we have to submit to a process of initiation. In the world of Browning's thought there is much that is strange, much that is new, much that is grotesque. There is no problem of life that he does not attempt to solve, no mystery of life that he is not ready to explain or reconcile. He insists that we take him seriously, for he himself is profoundly serious and earnest. He is not a singer, but a seer. In every line that he has written there is a vigorous movement of a strong and eager intellect. If his reader is incapable of sustained thought, or too indolent to rise into something like intensity of attention, then Browning has nothing to say to him. He

demands our faith in him as a master-teacher ; he will work no miracle for him who has no belief. Sometimes this sense of the power of mind in Browning is almost oppressive. We long for a little rest in the arduous novitiate he imposes on us. We feel that the vehicle he uses for the exposition of his thought is unequal to the vast strain he imposes on it. The verse moves stiffly beneath the tremendous weight of thought. The forms of poetry seem to cramp and fetter him. No poet who has ever written has so *tired* the minds of his readers. If Browning had possessed a less subtle and powerful intellect, if he had had held a narrower view of life, he would have written with infinitely greater ease, and would have doubled and quadrupled his popularity. But the compensating gain of this breadth of view is a corresponding breadth of sympathy. There is a perfectly unique Catholicity in his affinities. Life in its shame as well as its splendor, life in its baseness, its distorted aims, its tragic failures, its limitless follies, is still life to him, and is worthy of his compassionate scrutiny. His unconventionality is startling to ordinary readers ; they never know where to find Browning, or can anticipate what he will say or teach."

— *W. J. Dawson.*

"Tennyson has a vivid feeling of the dignity and potency of *law*. . . . Browning vividly feels the importance, the greatness and beauty of passions and enthusiasms, and his imagination is comparatively unimpressed by the presence of law and its operations. . . . It is not the order and regularity in the processes of the natural world which chiefly delight Browning's imagination, but the streaming forth of power, and will, and love from the whole face of the visible universe. . . .

"Tennyson considers the chief instruments of human progress to be a vast increase of knowledge and of political organization. Browning makes that progress dependent on the production of higher passions, and aspiration,—hopes, and joys, and sorrows. Tennyson finds the evidence of the truth of the doctrine of progress in the universal presence of a self-evolving law. Browning obtains his assurance of its truth from inward presages and prophecies of the soul, from anticipations, types, and symbols of a higher greatness in store for man, which even now reside within him, a creature ever unsatisfied, ever yearning upward in thought, feeling, and endeavor.

" . . . Hence, it is not obedience, it is not submission to a law of duty, which points out to us our true path of life, but rather infinite desire and endless aspiration. Browning's ideal of manhood in this world always recognizes the fact that it is the ideal of a creature who never can be perfected on earth, a creature whom other and higher lives await in an endless hereafter. . . .

"The gleams of knowledge which we possess are of chief value because they "sting with hunger for full light." The goal of knowledge, as of love, is God himself. Its most precious part is that which is least positive—those momentary intuitions of things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard. The needs of the highest parts of our humanity cannot be supplied by ascertained truth, in which we might rest, or which we might put to use for definite ends; rather by ventures of faith, which test the courage of the soul, we ascend from surmise to assurance, and so again to higher surmise."—Condensed from *Edward Dowden*.

"Coming to his technical achievements, we cannot fail to be impressed by Browning's remarkable power of rhyme as well as of variety in versification. No poet more clearly shows the spirit by the metrical rhythm of the lines. The mere arrangement of the words calls up a striking picture, so striking indeed that it could not be reproduced in painting or sculpture; no art but the words themselves could bring the picture so vividly before us. Browning excels most other poets in this power of word-painting. As a rule, a good description of external objects is improved by a good illustration, or at least such illustration is possible; but the artist would labor in vain who tried to depict on canvas the actual scene which Browning has described to us. If any artist doubts the truth of this, let him try for himself to present the sky as described in *Easter Day*, the poet as portrayed in *How it Strikes a Contemporary*. This power of allying sound with sense is very noticeable in *How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*. The words seem, as it were, tumbling over each other in the haste and excitement to reach a climax, and few can read the poem without feeling breathless at the end of it. Equally forcible is the calm and solemn atmosphere we breathe in *Evelyn Hope*; the pathos of a child's death rather than awe at the death of an active worker.

"Another, perhaps the most striking feature of Browning's work is the robustness which characterizes the matter of his poems, and which appears in an equally marked degree in their form. They present a note-worthy illustration of 'mens sana in corpore sano.' His clear, strong, energetic mind, unhampered by ill-health, seems to grasp the actual significance of man's

life ; and his deep sympathy with all that is real in man enables him to transmit the feeling of reality to all his works. Throughout there is nothing morbid, nothing weak, and little that is vague. He not only seems thoroughly alive and vigorous himself, but he endows with actual life and vigor every character which he introduces."—*Esther Phæbe Defries*.

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THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

A CHILD'S STORY

(Written for, and inscribed to W. M. the Younger)

I

Hamelin town's in Brunswick,
By famous Hanover city ;
The river Weser, deep and wide,
Washes its wall on the southern side ;
A pleasanter spot you never spied ;
But, when begins my ditty,
Almost five hundred years ago,
To see the townsfolk suffer so
From vermin, was a pity.

5

II

Rats !
They fought the dogs and killed the cats,
And bit the babies in the cradles,
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cooks' own ladles,
Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
And even spoiled the woman's chats
By drowning their speaking

10

15

1. **Hamelin.** The town is in Hanover, not in Brunswick, and is situated at the junction of the Weser and Hamel Rivers.

7. **five hundred years ago.** Browning dates the event 1376, while the date usually assigned is 1284.

With shrieking and squeaking
In fifty different sharps and flats.

20

III

At last the people in a body
To the Town hall came flocking :
" 'Tis clear," cried they, " our Mayor's a noddy ;
And as for our Corporation — shocking
To think we buy gowns lined with ermine 25
For dolts that can't or won't determine
What's best to rid us of our vermin !
You hope, because you're old and obese,
To find in the furry civic robe ease ?
Rouse up, sirs ! give your brains a racking 60
To find the remedy we're lacking,
Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing ! "
At this the Mayor and Corporation
Quaked with a mighty consternation.

IV

An hour they sat in council ; 35
At length the Mayor broke silence :
" For a guilder I'd my ermine gown sell
I wish I were a mile hence !
It's easy to bid one rack one's brain —
I'm sure my poor head aches again, 40
I've scratched it so, and all in vain.
Oh for a trap, a trap, a trap ! "

20. sharps and flats. In fifty different keys.

23. a noddy. A noodle; of no use at all.

28. obese. Browning's extravagant use of rhyme in the poem makes an interesting study.

37. guilder A common coin of the period The modern coin is worth about 40 cents.

Just as he said this, what should hap
 At the chamber door but a gentle tap?
 "Bless us," cried the Mayor, "what's that?" 45
 (With the Corporation as he sat,
 Looking little, though wondrous fat;
 Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister
 Than a too-long-opened oyster,
 Save when at noon his paunch grew muntinous 50
 For a plate of turtle, green and glutinous)
 "Only the scraping of shoes on the mat?
 Anything like the sound of a rat
 Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!"

v

"Come in!" — the Mayor cried, looking bigger: 55
 And in did come the strangest figure!
 His queer long coat from heel to head
 Was half of yellow and half of red,
 And he himself was tall and thin,
 With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin, 60
 With light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,
 No tuft on cheek, no beard on chin,
 But lips where smiles went out and in;
 There was no guessing his kith and kin:
 And nobody could enough admire 65
 The tall man and his quaint attire.
 Quoth one: "It's as my great grandsire,
 Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,
 Had walked this way from his painted tombstone!"

64. kith and kin. These words now have the same meaning.

68. Trump of Doom. *Revelation. VIII, 6.*

VI

He advanced to the council-table : 70
 And, " Please your honors," said he, " I'm able,
 By means of a secret charm, to draw
 All creatures living beneath the sun,
 That creep or swim or fly or run,
 After me so as you never saw ! 75
 And I chiefly use my charm
 On creatures that do people harm
 The mole and toad and newt and viper ;
 And people call me the Pied Piper. "
 (And here they noticed round his neck 80
 A scarf of red and yellow stripe,
 To match with his coat of self-same cheque :
 And at the scarf's end hung a pipe ;
 And his fingers, they noticed, were ever straying,
 As if impatient to be playing 85
 Upon this pipe, as low it dangled
 Over his vesture so old-fangled.)
 " Yet," said he, " poor piper as I am,
 In Tartary I freed the Cham,
 Last June, from his huge swarm of gnats , 90
 I eased in Asia the Nizam
 Of a monstrous brood of vampire-bats:
 And as for what your brain bewilders,
 If I can rid your town of rats
 Will you give me a thousand guilders ? " 95

87. *old-fangled*. Old-fashioned

89. *Cham*. The khan of Tartary. The word means "prince"

91. *Nizam*. An Indian title, originally used of the princes of the Deccan. The word means "regulator".

92. *vampire-bats*. Blood-sucking bats.

"One? fifty thousand!" - was the exclamation
Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation,

VII

Into the street the Piper stept,
 Smiling first a little smile,
 As if he knew what magic slept, 100
 In his quiet pipe the while :
 Then, like a musical adept,
 To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,
 And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled,
 Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled ; 105
 And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
 You heard as if an army muttered ;
 And the muttering grew to a grumbling ;
 And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling :
 And out of the houses the rats came tumbling. 110
 Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
 Brown rats, black rats, gray rats, tawny rats,
 Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
 Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
 Cocking tails and pricking whiskers, 115
 Families by tens and dozens,
 Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives—
 Followed the Piper for their lives,
 From street to street he piped advancing,
 And step for step they followed dancing, 120
 Until they came to the river Weser,
 Wherein all plunged and perished !
 —Save one, who, stout as Julius Caesar,
 Swam across and lived to carry
 (As he, the manuscript he cherished) 125
 To Rat-land home his commentary :

Which was : "At the first shrill notes of the pipe,
 I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,
 And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
 Into a cider press's gripe ; 130
 And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,
 And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,
 And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,
 And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks :
 And it seemed as if a voice 135
 (Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery
 Is breathed) called out, 'Oh, rats, rejoice !
 The world is grown to one vast drysaltery !
 So munch on, crunch on, take your nuncheon,
 Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon !' 140
 And just as a bulky sugar-pucheon,
 All ready staved, like a great sun shone
 Glorious scarce an inch before me,
 Just as methought it said, 'Come, bore me !
 — I found the Weser rolling o'er me.' 145

VIII

You should have heard the Hamelin people
 Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.
 "Go," cried the Mayor, "and get long poles,
 Poke out the nests and block up the holes !
 Consult with carpenters and builders, 150
 And leave in our town not even a trace
 Of the rats !" — when suddenly, up the face
 Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
 With a, "First if you please, my thousand guilders!"

133. train-oil. A product of whale blubber.

136. psaltery. A musical instrument used by the Hebrews.

137. nuncheon. The meal taken at noon.

153. perked. Looking at them in an insolent way.

IX

A thousand guilders ! The Mayor looked blue ; 155
 So did the Corporation, too.
 For council dinners made rare havoc
 With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hock ;
 And half the money would replenish
 Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish. 160
 To pay this sum to a wandering fellow
 With a gypsy coat of red and yellow !
 " Beside, " quoth the Mayor, with a knowing wink,
 " Our business was done at the river's brink :
 We saw with our eyes the vermin sink 165
 And what's dead can't come to life, I think.
 So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink
 From the duty of giving you something for drink,
 And a matter of money to put in your poke ;
 But as for the guilders, what we spoke 170
 Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.
 Beside, our losses have made us thrifty.
 A thousand guilders ! Come, take fifty ! "

X

The Piper's face fell, and he cried,
 " No trifling ! I can't wait ! Beside, 175
 I've promised to visit by dinner-time
 Bagdat, and accept the prime
 Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,
 For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,
 Of a nest of scorpions no survivor : 180
 With him I proved no bargain-driver,

158. claret, etc. Various kinds of wine.

169. poke. Pouch or pocket.

179. Caliph. The title of an Eastern potentate.

With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver !
 And folks who put me in a passion
 May find me pipe after another fashion."

XI

"How?" cried the Mayor, "d'ye think I brook 185
 Being worse treated than a cook ?
 Insulted by a lazy ribald
 With idle pipe and vesture piebald ?
 You threaten us, fellow ? Do your worst !
 Blow your pipe there tili you burst !" 190

XII

Once more he stept into the street,
 And to his lips again
 Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane ;
 And ere he blew three notes (such sweet,
 Soft notes as yet musician's cunning 195
 Never gave the enraptured air)
 There was a rustling that seemed like a bustling
 Of merry crowds justling at pitching and hustling ;
 Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clattering,
 Little hands clapping, and little tongues chattering, 200
 And, like fowls in a farm-yard, when barley is scat-
 tering,
 Out came the children running.
 All the little boys and girls,
 With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
 And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls, 205
 Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after
 The wonderful music with shouting and laughter.

182. *stiver*. A coin worth very little.

XIII

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
 As if they were changed into blocks of wood.
 Unable to move a step, or cry 210
 To the children merrily skipping by,
 —Could only follow with the eye
 That joyous crowd at the piper's back.
 But how the Mayor was on the rack,
 And the wretched Council's bosoms beat, 215
 As the Piper turned from the High Street
 To where the Weser rolled its waters,
 Right in the way of their sons and daughters!
 However, he turned from South to West,
 And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed, 220
 And after him the children pressed:
 Great was the joy in every breast.
 "He never can cross that mighty top!
 He's forced to let the piping drop,
 And we shall see our children stop." 225
 When lo, as they reached the mountain-side,
 A wondrous portal open wide,
 As if a cavern were suddenly hollowed;
 And the Piper advanced, and the children followed,
 And when all were in, to the very last, 230
 The door in the mountain-side shut fast.
 Did I say all? No! One was lame,
 And could not dance the whole of the way;
 And in after years, if you would blame
 His sadness, he was used to say, — 235
 "It's dull in our town since our playmates left!"

220. Koppelberg. There is no mill near Hamelin that fits the story.

I can't forget that I'm bereft
 Of all the pleasant sight they see,
 Which the Piper also promised me.
 For he led us, he said, to a joyous land 240
 Joining the town and just at hand,
 Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew
 And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
 And everything was strange and new ;
 The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here, 245
 And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
 And honey-bees had lost their stings,
 And horses were born with eagles' wings ;
 And just as I became assured
 My lame foot would be speedily cured, 250
 The music stopped and I stood still,
 And found myself outside the hill,
 Left alone against my will,
 To go no longer limping as before,
 And never hear of that country more ! " 255

XIX

Alas, alas for Hamelin !
 There came into many a burgher's pate
 A text which says that Heaven's gate
 Opens to the rich at as easy rate
 As the needle's eye takes a camel in ! 260
 The Mayor sent East, West, North, and South,
 To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,
 Wherever it was men's lot to find him,
 Silver and gold to his heart's content,
 If he'd only return the way he went, 265

257. burgher. Citizen.

258. A text. *Matthew, XIX, 24.*

And bring the children behind him.
But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavor,
And Piper and dancers were gone forever,
They made a decree that lawyers never
Should think their records dated duly 270
If, after the day of the month of the year,
These words did not as well appear,
"And so long after what happened here
On the twenty-second of July,
Thirteen hundred and seventy-six ;" 275
And the better in memory to fix
The place of the children's last retreat,
They called it the Pied Piper's Street —
Where any one playing on pipe or tabor
Was sure for the the future to lose his labor. 280
Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern
To shock with mirth a street so solemn ;
But opposite the place of the cavern
They wrote the story on a column,
And on the great church window painted 285
The same, to make the world acquainted
How their children were stolen away,
And there it stands to this very day.
And I must not omit to say
That in Transylvania there's a tribe 290
Of alien people who ascribe
The outlandish ways and dress
On which their neighbors lay such stress,
To their fathers and mothers having risen
Out of some subterraneous prison 295
Into which they were trepanned
Long time ago in a mighty band

296. trepanned. Trapped.

Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
But how or why, they don't understand.

xv

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers 300
Of scores out with all men—especially pipers !
And, whether they pipe us free from rats or from mice,
If we've promised them aught, let us keep our promise !

“ HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX ”

I sprang to the stirrup, and Joris, and he ;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three;
“ Good speed ! ” cried the watch, as the gate-bolts
undrew;
“ Speed ! ” echoed the wall to us galloping through;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest, s
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.
v
Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our
place;
I turned in my saddle and made its girth tight,

300. **wipers.** The expression is derived from the practice of keeping accounts with chalk on a slate, or board, the score being wiped out when settled.

3. **the watch.** The warder, or guardian of the gate.

5. **the postern.** A small gate in the wall of a fortified town.

6. **the midnight.** The black darkness of the night.

7. **the great pace.** Referring both to the speed of the horses and their long stride.

8. **changing our place.** Riding side by side as they had set out.

Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right, 10
 Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
 Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

'Twas moonset at starting ; but while we drew near
 Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear;
 At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see; 15
 At Duffeld, 'twas morning as plain as could be;
 And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-
 chime,
 So, Joris broke silence with, " Yet there is time!"

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
 And against him the cattle stood black every one, 20
 To stare through the mist at us galloping past,
 And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
 With resolute shoulders, each butting away
 The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray:

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent
 back 25
 For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track;
 And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance
 O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance!
 And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
 His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on. 30

10. **the pique.** The pommel of the saddle.

14. **twilight.** The light before the rising of the sun.

15. **yellow star.** The morning star.

23. **butting.** A strong expression which suggests both the gallant bearing of the horse and the thickness of the mist.

24. **bluff.** Boldly and strongly outlined.

27. **one eye's black intelligence.** A beautiful poetic form for "one intelligent black eye."

28. **askance.** Sideways.

29. **spume-flakes.** Flakes of foam.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned; and cried Joris, "Stay
spur!

Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,
We'll remember at Aix"—for one heard the quick
wheeze

Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering
knees,

And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank, 35
As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky;
The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like
chaff; 40

Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

"How they'll greet us!"—and all in a moment his
roan

Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight 45
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

Then I cast loose my buff-coat, each holster let fall,

31. **Dirck groaned.** He felt that his horse was failing.

32. **Roos.** The name of the horse.

39. **pitiless laugh.** The riders were suffering from the intense heat.

41. **dome spire.** "The spire of the *Dom*, or cathedral." Charlemagne is buried in the Cathedral at Aix.

49. **buff-coat.** A heavily padded leather coat used as part of the defensive armor of the time. **holster.** Leather pistol cases attached to the saddle.

Shook of both my jack-boots, let go belt and all, 50
 Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
 Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without
 peer ;

Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad
 or good,

Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

And all I remember is, — friends flocking round 55

As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground ;

And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,

As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,

Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)

Was no more than his due who brought good news
 from Ghent. 60

50. **jack-boots.** Heavy military riding-boots, reaching above the knee.

54. **Aix.** Aix-la-Chapelle, in Rhenish Prussia on the Belgian frontier.

59. **burgesses.** Citizens of the city.

60. **good news from Ghent.** Stopford Brooke, in commenting upon the patriotic note in Browning's poetry says: "When Browning was touched by the impulse to write about a great deed in war, he does not choose, like Tennyson, English subjects. *The Cavalier Tunes* have no importance as patriotic songs. They are mere experiments. The poem, *How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*, has twice their vigor. His most intense war-incident is taken from the history of the French wars under Napoleon. The most ringing and swiftest poem of personal dash and daring—and at sea, as if he was tired of England's mistress-ship of the waves—a poem one may set side by side with the fight of *The Revenge*, is *Hervé Riel*. It is a tale of a Breton sailor saving the French fleet from the English, with the sailor's mockery of England embedded in it; and Browning sent the hundred pounds he got for it to the French, after the siege of Paris.

"It was not that he did not honor his country, but that, as an artist, he loved more the foreign lands : and that in his deepest life he belonged less to England than to the world of man. The great deeds of England, did not prevent him from feeling, with as much keenness as Tennyson felt those of England, the great deeds of France and Italy. National self-sacrifice in critical hours, splendid courage in love and war, belonged, he thought, to all peoples. Perhaps he felt, with Tennyson's insularity dominating his ears that it was as well to put the other side. I think he might have done a little more for England. There is only one poem. out of all his huge production, which recognizes the great deeds of our Empire in war : and this did not come of a life-long feeling, such as he had for Italy, but from a sudden impulse which arose in him, as sailing by, he saw Trafalgar and Gibraltar, glorified and incarnadined by a battle-sunset:

Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the North-west
died away ;

Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red reeking into Cadiz
Bay ;

Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay ;
In the dimmest North-east distance dawned Gibraltar
grand and grey ;

"Here and here did England help me ; how can I help
England?" — say.

Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise
and pray,

While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

It is a little thing, and when it leaves the sunset it is poor. And there is twice the fervor of its sunset in the description of the sunrise at Asolo in *Pippa Passes*."

NOTES ON THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN

This poem was written in May, 1842, for the amusement of Willie Macready, son of Macready, the famous actor and a personal friend of the poet. The boy early gave evidence of a decided talent for drawing and in order to give him something original to illustrate during an illness, Browning wrote the Poem. It was not intended for publication, and was included in *Bells and Pomegranates* in 1842 in order to fill up a vacant space.

Edward Berdoo in *The Browning Cyclopædia* (Macmillan) says: "The story told in the poem is one of a class of legends dealing with the subject of cheating magicians of a promised reward for services rendered. Verstegan, in his *Restitution of Decayed Intelligence* (1634), has the story on which apparently Mr. Browning's poem is written. 'A piper named Bunting undertook for a certain sum of money to free the town of Hamelin, in Brunswick, of the rats which infested it: but when he had drowned all the rats in the river Weser, the townsmen refused to pay the sum agreed upon. The piper in revenge, collected together all the children of Hamelin, and enticed them by his piping into a cavern in the side of the mountain Koppelberg, which instantly closed upon them, and a hundred and thirty went down alive into the pit (June 26th, 1284.) The street through which Bunting conducted his victims was Bungen, and from that day to this no music is ever allowed to be played in this particular street.' The same tale is told of the fiddler of Brandenburg: the children were led to the Marienberg, which opened upon them and swallowed them up. When Lorch was infested with ants, a hermit led the multitudinous insects by his pipe into a lake, where they perished. As the inhabitants refused to pay the stipulated price, he led their pigs the same dance, and they, too, perished in the lake. Next year a charcoal t... cleared the same place of crickets; and when the price

agreed upon was refused, he led the sheep of the inhabitants into the lake. The third year came a plague of rats, which an old man of the mountain piped away and destroyed. Being refused his reward, he piped the children of Lorch into the Tannenberg. There are similiar Persian and Chinese tales. Some trace the origin of the legend to the 'Child Crusade,' or to an abduction of children. For a considerable time Hamelin dated its public documents from the event." It is interesting to note that Browning's poem was in 1880 translated into German prose, and occupied the whole of one number of the local paper of Hamelin.

123. **Julius Caesar.** Julius Caesar is said to have swum across the harbor of Alexandria, when besieged there by the Egyptians in 48 B. C. He is also said to have used only one hand in swimming, as the other was occupied in holding his *Commentaries* over his head to preserve the manuscript from getting wet.

269. **a decree.** Frederick Ryland quotes from Verstegan: "In memory whereof it was then ordained that from henceforth no drum, pipe or other instrment should be sounded in the street leading to the gate through which they passed, nor no inn be there holden. And it was also established from that time forward in all public writings that should be made in the town, after the date therein sat down of the year of our Lord, the date of the year of the going forth of the children should be added, the which they have accordingly ever since continued. And this great wonder happened on the 22nd day of July in the year of our Lord, 1376."

HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX

This poem was written by Browning under the bulwark of a vessel, off the African coast, after he had been at sea long enough to appreciate even the fancy of a gallop on the back of a certain good horse "York" then in his stable at home. It was written in pencil on the fly-leaf of a favorite Italian book, and was subsequently published in 1845 in *Bells and Pomegranates*. There is no actual basis in history for the incidents of the poem, although

it is easy to imagine such an adventure to have taken place. The poem is simply the glorification of riding, the delight in rapid motion. The supposed date of the ride to carry out the secret mission was sometime during the attempted subjugation of the Netherlands by the Spaniards in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Browning himself dates the poem 16—.

Edward Berdoe in *The Browning Cyclopædia* (Sonnenschein) says: "Dining one day last year at Trinity College, Cambridge, with that enthusiastic Browning scholar, Mr E. H. Blakeney, we discussed the question of the comparative popularity of Browning's shorter poems and it was decided that he should ask the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* to put it to the vote in his columns. A prize was offered for the list of fifty poems which came nearest to the standard list obtained by collating the lists of all the competitors." The result of this vote was that the first poem on the list was *How They Brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*, while *Incident of the French Camp* stood twenty-second.

The route followed by the riders is easily traced on the map of Belgium. Frederick Ryland in *Selections from Browning* (Bell) says: "The route followed is actual enough. They go north-easterly to Lokeren, then keep due east to Boom, and then more south-easterly to Aershot, about ten miles from Louvain. The poet does not say that they went to Hasselt, but 'by Hasselt', and so with Looz and Tongres. They probably passed between Hasselt and the two latter places, riding straight across country to Aix-la-Chapelle. The ride can hardly have been less than 130 miles, and perhaps twenty or thirty more."

41. Ryland says: "It is noteworthy that while the words *Dom* and *Duomo*, both from Lat. *domus*, a house, signify a cathedral or great church, the corresponding English word *dome* signifies a cupola. This is probably due to the fact that when Charlemagne built his great abbey church at Aix he crowned it with a cupola—this feature, as well as the general plan, being taken from the Byzantine Church of St. Vitale at Ravenna."

57. **this Roland of mine.** The horse, Roland, is of course the hero of the story. The interest of the poem centres around the long ride, showing as it does the spirit and endurance of the horse and the sympathy which existed between it and its rider. Thomas Marc Parrott says: "Roland the most famous of

Charlemagne's heroes, became during the middle ages the symbol of liberty and free government in the towns of Germany and the Netherlands. There is thus a special significance in the name of the horse which is celebrated in this poem."

THE BALLAD

BALLAD POETRY

The revived interest in our old national poetry, which dates from the publication of Percy's *Reliques* in 1765, led to some of the most important developments in Continental literature. In England, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Scott, and Keats were strongly influenced by the ballad movement, and were not slow to acknowledge their debt to Bishop Percy's publication. Wordsworth confessed that English poetry had been absolutely redeemed by them. "I do not think that there is a writer in verse of the present day who would not be proud to acknowledge his obligations to the *Reliques*. I know that it is so with my friends, and, for myself, I am happy on this occasion to make a public avowal of my own."

THE BALLAD, ITS NATURE AND ITS ORIGIN

With regard to the definition of the term "ballad" there has been much needless confusion, at least in the popular mind. The question of the ultimate origin of the ballad is likewise fraught with confusion; but this arises from the necessary mystery which surrounds a creative process, and constitutes in itself one of the most difficult of literary problems.

CONFUSION AS TO THE NAME

The confusion with regard to the name makes it almost necessary to define what the ballad is not, before determining what it is. No one probably would con-

found the artificial ballade of the schools (the product of French imitation) with the native ballad of popular growth. But a great many people do persist in applying the term to modern poems of the type of *Barbara Frietchie*, *The Wreck of the Hesperus*, or the *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

These narrative poems have all borrowed certain surface characteristics from the genuine ballad, something of its simplicity and quaintness, perhaps, but with a distant suggestion at the best of the unaffected *naivete* and artless manner of the original type. This primitive form, as we must imagine it once to have existed, was essentially a narrative poem in lyrical stanzaic form, designed, in its earliest stages at least, to serve as an accompaniment for the dance, bearing no traces of individual authorship, and preserved mainly by oral tradition. It is therefore imperative, for the sake of precision, to discriminate absolutely between the artistic imitation of popular ballads and the genuine ballad of the people. To make this distinction clearer, a short account must be given of the more important theories connected with the origin of the ballad properly so called.

ORIGIN OF THE BALLAD

We are here confronted with two rival theories. The question roughly divides itself as follows:—Did the ballad make itself?—or was it produced like any poem in modern times by some individual whose talents singled him out as the versifier or bard of his rough community? The first theory, it will be observed, almost eliminates the individual in favor of the primitive community. The second theory insists upon the

positive intervention of the individual in the shaping of the ballad, and holds that the circumstances of oral transmission, by which all the ancient ballads were preserved, are sufficient to account for their popular characteristics. They were thus subjected to constant variation, and all traces of individual authorship were swiftly obliterated. On the other hand, supporters of the communal theory insisted "that the ballad must be the outcome and the expression of the whole community, and that this community must be homogeneous — must belong to a time when, in the common atmosphere of ignorance, so far as book-lore is concerned, one habit of thought and one standard of action animate every member from prince to ploughboy. Ballads of the primitive type — of course we do not know them in their original form — were the product of a people as yet undivided into a lettered and an unlettered class. When learning came among the folk it drove the ballad first into byways, and then altogether out of living literature."

It will be readily seen that, even if we grant the assumption of race authorship, it would be impossible to account for the words and melody of the ballads without presupposing that some one first said or sang them. We therefore find that the modern authorities on ballad literature abandon both of the above theories on their extreme side, and chiefly concern themselves with adjusting the respective shares of poet and people in the making of the primitive ballad. Thus the late Professor Child, the supreme authority on this question, writes on the subject of ballad poetry as follows: "Though they do not write themselves, as William Grimm has said, still the author counts for nothing, and it is not by mere

accident, but with the best reason, that they have come down to us anonymous. '

We must imagine that some minstrel, skilled in music and song, has gathered the people together on an occasion of great significance. All his audience are thrilling with the excitement of some recent martial event, or stirred by the memory of some feat of warlike prowess. The deeds of the hero are familiar to all. His history, whether recent or legendary, is common property; and they are now gathered together to celebrate him in dance and song. Some one suggests a well-known episode in his career, and forthwith the minstrel strikes a martial strain and chants the exploits of the hero in rude and broken verse, improvised for the occasion. He gives out the refrain, and the people repeat it in chorus, while he meditates the verse which follows. Any one who thinks of a suitable verse may contribute it. The respective parts of poet and populace are here discernible. The actual words and melody must emanate from the individual, but the sentiments are of the people.

The minstrel is keenly alive to the effect of his stanzas upon his hearers, and when he carries his ballad wares to the neighboring castle he is careful to omit what has not given pleasure.

Meanwhile this same rude ballad, which we have seen in the making, has also been carried hither and thither by all who had sung its easy melodies, and they too refashion it to their liking, forgetting and changing, adding and striking out. Finally, if the ballad has stood the wear and tear of time, it is, at last, in one or many of its forms, committed to manuscript, and perpetuated, perhaps, after many centuries, in printer's ink.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BALLAD

Being thus the product of an unsophisticated and unreflecting age, the genuine ballad is necessarily *naïve*, and marked by an utter absence of subjectivity and self-consciousness. Coming from the people as a whole, "from the compact body as yet undivided by lettered or unlettered taste, it represents the sentiment neither of individuals nor of a class. It inclines to the narrative, the concrete and the exterior, and it has no mark of the artist and his sentiment." In view also of its spontaneous character, and because the episodes it presents are intimately known to the audience, its narrative is extremely broken by frequent omissions and abrupt transitions, while repetitions and stock descriptive phrases are constantly resorted to in order to facilitate memory.

As remarkable as the absence of reflection and sentimentality in the substance is the lack of poetic adornment in the style. Metaphors and similes are rare, and when found are usually exceedingly simple—"red as a rose," "as green as grass"—conventional phrases that all ballads share in common. There is never any intention to produce a fine poetic effect by their means. Iteration is the leading characteristic of ballad style, and the story is frequently told by "incremental repetition," which Professor Gummere describes as the repetition of a question with its answer. This may go on from stanza to stanza until the poem is completed.

It is impossible to quote any short ballad which should exemplify all these qualities. The ballad of *Sir Patrick Spens* is given here because of its undoubted excellence. It lacks refrain, and its extreme brevity

did not render repetition or reiteration essential (but notice lines 8 and 20). In other respects it adequately enough represents the general ballad characteristics.

First, as to poetic treatment. It deals with a pathetic theme in a manly and straightforward way. There is a total absence of sentimentality and moralizing. The theme is entered upon at once with no labored preparatory description. The events of the narrative were familiar, and superfluity of detail is therefore shunned. The sudden transition from description to dialogue is especially characteristic.

Secondly, as to form. It is written in the usual ballad measure, like *The Ancient Mariner*, having four verses in each stanza, riming a, b, c, b, with four accents in the first and third verses and three each in the second and fourth.

The general movement is iambic, but as in *The Ancient Mariner*, there are not infrequent variations from this type, e. g. :

1. Omissions of unstressed syllables, especially in the initial foot, e. g., stanza 2, line 1.

2. Anapaestic movement, e. g., stanza 6, line 4.

There are frequent substitutions in ballad poetry of trochees for iambs. The essential thing seems to be to preserve merely the proper number of accents.

Rhyme.—Initial rhyme or alliteration was the system of Anglo-Saxon verse. In ballad poetry alliteration may serve as an adornment, but never takes the place of rhyme.

The rhyming system of this typical ballad does not therefore materially differ from *The Ancient Mariner*, except that assonance is occasionally substituted for ordinary rhyme; e. g., stanzas 6 and 11. Internal rhyme, will be noticed in stanza 11, line 1.

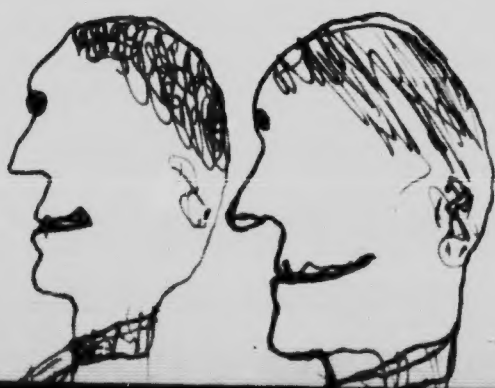
SIR PATRICK SPENS

1. The king sits in Dumferling toun
Drinking the blude-reid wine :
" O whar will I get good sailor,
To sail this schip of mine ? "
2. Up and spak an eldern knight,
Sat at the king's richt kne :
" Sir Patrick Spence is the best sailor,
That sails upon the se. "
3. The king has written a braid letter,
And signed it wi his hand,
And sent it to Sir Patrick Spence,
Was walking on the sand.
4. The first line that Sir Patrick read,
A loud lauch lauched he ;
The next line that Sir Patrick read,
The teir blinded his ee.
" O wha is this has don this deid,
This ill deid don to me,
Do send me out this time o' the yeir,
To sail upon the se ? "
6. " Mak hast, mak haste, my mirry men all,
Our guid schip sails the morne : "
" O say na sae, my master deir,
For I feir a deadlie storme.
7. " Late, late yestreen I saw the new moone,
Wi the auld moone in hir arme,
And I feir, I feir, my deir master,
That we will cum to harme. "
8. O our Scots nobles wer richt laith
To weet their cork-heild schoone :
Bot lang owre a' the play wer playd,
Their hats they swam aboone.
9. O lang, lang may their ladies sit,
Wi thair fans into their hand,
Or eir they se Sir Patrick Spence
Cum sailing to the land.

10. O lang, lang may the ladies stand,
Wi thair gold kems in their hair,
Waiting for thair ain deir lords,
For they'll se theme na mair.
11. Haf owre, haf owre to Aberdour,
It's fiftie fadom deip,
And thair lies guid Sir Patrick Spence,
Wi the Scots lords at his feit.

APPLICATION TO THE POEMS IN THE TEXT

The student should examine the text of the various poems in this book and note their adherence to or divergence from the true ballad characteristics: 1. As to the method of composition. 2. As to the general effect of the poem. 3. As to form, with reference alike to prosody and language.





1. I describe the ^{II} pulgum ~~in~~
~~the way to the~~ of out
2. I describe the forest.
3. Why did they continue
 their journey long after
 darkness had set in?
4. I describe the open space
 in the forest where they
 came
5. I describe the place
 where the ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~the~~
 where they were killed the
 Thunder-oak
6. I describe the assembly of
 the tribe around the Thunder
 oak.



2. ~~Q~~ (a) How he was ~~Indra~~
- (b) How did he receive his friend?
- (c) Why did he say a human sacrifice
 was necessary?
- (d) Why was chosen the victim?
- (e) How was the sacrifice
 performed?